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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa . . . . (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 67

Promotion and protection of human rights

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (A/61/611)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/61/623)

The President: Members will recall that at its 57th plenary meeting, on 22 November 2006, the General Assembly decided that sub-item (b) of agenda item 67 would also be considered directly in plenary meeting for the sole purpose of taking action, during the main part of the sixty-first session, on the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that would be recommended in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

In that connection, a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities has been circulated in document A/61/611.

The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/61/623.

Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members that the Braille version of the draft resolution and the draft Convention are available at the documentation booths, located on either side of the back of the General Assembly Hall.

The General Assembly is about to take another important step towards the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Today we will adopt, by consensus, the landmark Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I would like first to thank Don MacKay, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, and the other members of the Committee for their hard work and dedication.

I would like also to thank the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and persons with disabilities who have been deeply involved throughout the process. Their participation is greatly appreciated.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

As of today, all Member States have committed to promoting and protecting the human rights, freedoms and dignity of all persons with disabilities. We have now reached a global consensus: The disabled are entitled to the full range of civil rights that those without disabilities enjoy. To fully implement this historic agreement, we also require a change in cultural attitudes towards the disabled.

In the past, mainstream society has tended to act out of a culture of pity, rather than embrace and celebrate human differences. Too often, people with disabilities have had to manage their own disability as well as their relative invisibility to society and policymakers. They have tended to be denied equal access to the basic rights and fundamental freedoms that most of us take for granted. That marginalization has been particularly acute for women and children.

There are over 650 million disabled persons in the world. Most live in developing countries. Today we will send a clear message of solidarity to them. By reaffirming the dignity of all humankind, we recognize that all societies stand to benefit from empowering that important community.

The disabled do not see themselves as being limited in life by their circumstances, so neither should we. Going forward, then, we must respect people with disabilities as equals, exercising the same fundamental rights under the law.

The adoption of this Convention is a great opportunity to celebrate the emergence of the comprehensive guidelines the world so urgently needs. It is an opportunity to reaffirm our universal commitment to the rights and dignity of all peoples, without discrimination. The Convention can also provide a much-needed impetus for wider cultural changes in the way that the world perceives disabled people.

I look forward to the full implementation of the Convention by Member States, with the involvement of all concerned parties, in particular NGOs and civil society groups, whose energy, compassion and willingness to work in a spirit of cooperation greatly contributed to the final agreement.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, who will deliver a message from the Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I should like to deliver this message on behalf of the Secretary-General, who regrets that he was unable to be in this Hall today.

We all, I think, recognize what an important event this is — the day on which the General Assembly adopts the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Obviously, for the 650 million people around the world living with disabilities, today promises, we hope, to be the dawn of a new era in which disabled people will no longer have to endure the discriminatory practices and attitudes that have been permitted to prevail for far too long.

This Convention is a remarkable and forward-looking document. While it focuses on the rights and development of people with disabilities, it also speaks about our societies as a whole and about the need to enable all persons to contribute to the best of their abilities and potential.

Throughout the ages, the treatment of people with disabilities has brought out some of the very worst aspects of human nature. Too often, those living with disabilities have been seen as objects of embarrassment and, at best, of condescending pity and charity. Societies have even gone out of their way to ensure that persons with disabilities are neither seen nor heard. On paper, they may have enjoyed the same rights as others. In real life, they have often been relegated to the margins and denied the opportunities that others take for granted.

It was the community of the disabled themselves that worked tirelessly and insistently to promote this Convention, and the United Nations, I am pleased to say, responded. In three short years, the Convention became a landmark several times over. It was the first human rights treaty to be adopted in the twenty-first century, the most rapidly negotiated human rights treaty in the history of international law, and the first to emerge from lobbying conducted extensively through the Internet.

We have already learned from experience in countries that have implemented legislation related to disability that change comes more rapidly when laws are in place. Once the Convention is adopted, signed and ratified, it will have an impact on national laws that will transform how people with disabilities can live their lives. It will offer a way forward to ensure that those with disabilities enjoy the same human rights as everyone else — in education, employment, access to buildings and other facilities, and access to justice.

That will not happen overnight. Much work remains to be done to produce the results that aspire from the Convention. I urge all Governments to start by ratifying and then implementing it without delay. Its adoption happens to fall in the Western Christian calendar on the day of Saint Lucy, celebrated in some countries as the patron saint of both blindness and of light. Let us ensure that this day marks a new dawn. Let it usher in an age when all those living with disabilities around the world become fully fledged citizens of their societies.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee in paragraph 7 of its report in document A/61/611.

Before I call on speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the great pleasure of participating in this meeting to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We have reached a consensus on adopting that international legal instrument, an important adjunct to international law, and it should be our ongoing concern to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights as everyone else.

I take this opportunity, in my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for December, to speak to the Assembly on behalf of Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

I also take this opportunity to stress that our ability to join the consensus is based on our interpretation of article 12 of the Convention, in which we recognize the rights of persons with disabilities as equal to those of others, that they have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law, and that they enjoy national legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life. That reference was included in the Committee's report with the note requested by the Arab States to be distributed as an official document at the eighth session of the Committee. We have learned from the Secretariat that our letter will be distributed in order to reflect our statement on that position.

Mr. Morris (Jamaica): It is indeed a great pleasure to be here to participate in this very historic occasion. On behalf of the people of Jamaica, I want to really express my profound appreciation to all who have participated in this very historic occasion.

I do so with a great degree of pride as one who stands also to benefit from the implementation of this special Convention, having a disability myself, having found myself in a very precarious position as the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security in the Government of Jamaica, and having the responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this very important Convention.

I want to express my profound appreciation and convey my congratulations to those who ensured that the Convention would reach the state at which it stands today. I want to commend the delegation of Mexico for its vision in ensuring that the draft resolution was brought to the General Assembly, and also to thank Ambassador Gallegos, who was the first designated Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee. I recall that three years ago, when Jamaica first started to participate in this very special work, Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga said that he thought that it would take about five to six years for the Convention to become a reality, based on the history of conventions that have been associated with the United Nations. Today, however, we are here to adopt a Convention in record time. Within three years, we have a Convention to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

We also want to express our profound appreciation to Ambassador MacKay for the able way that he presided over the various sessions after the baton was handed to him by Ambassador Gallegos, and to point out that, because of his style and his competence, we have been able to accomplish so much within such a short period. There were times when we thought that we were going to encounter major encumbrances, but Ambassador MacKay, because of his style, was able to negotiate and help us reach the point at which we find ourselves today.

Jamaica implores members of this body to ensure that, following the deliberations that we have had over the past three years and what we have accomplished, we move on to the implementation phase and have the

Convention implemented, because it will impact on the 650 million disabled persons living across the world. We stand ready, as a nation State, to ensure that the provisions outlined in the Convention are implemented. As a matter of fact, we are well on our way to ensuring that the provisions of this Convention are fully implemented. We stand ready to cooperate with States and civil society organizations to ensure that the lives of persons with disabilities are improved, not just in Jamaica or in the Caribbean, but throughout the world.

Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands): Thank you very much, Madam President, for organizing this meeting and for your very edifying statement. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations and non-governmental organizations that have worked hard to get the United Nations to where we are today. In addition, I want to particularly thank my friend and colleague Ambassador Don MacKay for his wonderful work in chairing the Ad Hoc Committee.

The intent of a treaty is expressed in its preamble, and the Marshall Islands affirms that its support for the draft convention is based on its expression of the conviction that persons with disabilities have "inherent dignity and worth" (A/61/611, annex I) on an equal basis with all other persons. The Marshall Islands understands that article 10 guarantees the "right to life" of disabled persons from the moment of conception and throughout their natural lives until natural death.

The Marshall Islands accepts the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" with the understanding that it does not include abortion and that its use in article 25 (a) does not create any abortion rights, cannot be interpreted to constitute support for or endorsement or promotion of abortion and does not create, and would not constitute, recognition of any new international law, obligations or human rights.

The Marshall Islands is fully committed to protecting the lives of persons with disabilities and understands that article 25 (f) is to be interpreted as ensuring that such persons are not denied medical life-preserving treatment with the intent of ending their lives and that they not be denied food and fluids to preserve life, regardless of the method of administration.

Ms. Halabi (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic attaches great importance to the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and considers this to be an integral part of our national economic and social development plan. We have established a central ministerial council, comprising ministers and provincial government representatives from all over the country, to closely follow what is being done to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities in all fields and in accordance with Syrian law.

Here, I should like to emphasize that the Syrian Arab Republic participated in the negotiations on the draft convention from the outset with a view to achieving a text that would guarantee the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, their fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with all others and their protection, in accordance with the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

We were able to join in the consensus on the draft international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities based on our interpretation that no provision would contradict our cultural specificities, religion, customs or history, and therefore that the implementation of its protections must take into account those characteristics and that background. My delegation also considers the draft convention to recognize no rights other than those recognized for other persons within the framework of our national legislation and international obligations.

With respect to paragraph 2 of article 12, "Equal recognition before the law", I would like to reaffirm that our interpretation of the term "legal capacity" presupposes the capacity to enjoy rather than to exercise, and that the capacity to exercise is determined by the nature and degree of the disability in question, so as to protect the rights of persons with disabilities as well as the rights of others.

In addition, my delegation was surprised to see the addition of a comma in paragraph (e) of the preamble of the Arabic-language version. In our view, this changes the paragraph's meaning from what was agreed to in the English version. I would like to stress that this comma does not appear in the other language versions and was not in the text when the Ad Hoc Committee adopted it on 5 December. Accordingly, my delegation can join the consensus in favour of the draft convention once the comma has been deleted from the Arabic version.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee in paragraph 7 of its report (A/61/611). May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/106).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after adoption of the resolution, I would remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Negm (Egypt): The delegation of Egypt went along with the consensus with regard to the international Convention on the understanding that the reference to "sexual and reproductive health services" in article 25 (a) does not by any means entail the authorization of abortion, except in cases where Egyptian national laws permit it.

Mr. Pereyra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to note that Peru appreciates the leadership and excellent work done by the Chairman of the Special Committee, Ambassador Don MacKay of New Zealand, throughout the negotiating process on the Convention. We would also like to highlight the work of his predecessor, Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador.

Peru considers the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities to be a tremendous achievement in terms of the development, expansion and deepening of human rights around the world. It is the outcome of the lengthy and fully representative negotiating process in which States and civil society organizations, including associations of persons with disabilities, participated actively.

This process has proven that while there are various positions concerning certain substantive issues in the text of the Convention, the international community is animated by the clear resolve to adopt agreements that guarantee the full exercise, promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

The unrestricted respect for human rights is a State policy and a constituent element of Peru's foreign policy. Measures recently adopted by the Government of Peru in the area of social policy will make it possible to ensure greater exercise of human rights, with special attention to the most vulnerable groups. Thus, Peru welcomes the commendable international effort that has led to the general agreement on the text of the Convention and Optional Protocol that bring us together today.

At the same time, Peru, in keeping with a position expressed in various international forums, would like to place on record the fact that the Peruvian Constitution recognizes the right to life from the moment of conception. Consequently, Peru declares that the programmes and health care, even in the area of sexual and reproductive health mentioned in article 25 (a) of the Convention, will be implemented in terms of the unrestricted respect for life consecrated in our Constitution and laws and that the provisions of the Convention cannot be interpreted as weakening these legal standards.

Finally, the Government of Peru confirms its commitment to implementation of the Convention in the framework of national policies that are consistent with the principles of this Convention, affirming a culture of inclusion whereby persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights as other citizens.

Mrs. Hasteh (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation would like to express our gratitude, appreciation and satisfaction at the adoption of this very important Convention. We would like to make two points in our explanation of vote, both of which concern my delegation's interpretation of article 12, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

That paragraph refers to the rights of the disabled, which should be recognized fully on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life, but it does not refer to action. Due to the level and degree of disability, the responsibility to act may differ among disabled people.

Secondly, Iran accepts the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" with the understanding that the phrase does not include abortion, and that its use in article 25 (a) does not create any abortion rights and cannot be interpreted as constituting promotion of abortion.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I would like to express our satisfaction upon today's adoption of this very important legal instrument, which no doubt will make a contribution to the well-being of all social sectors due to its universal and humanitarian character. This is an historic event in which there has been broad participation by civil society, non-governmental organizations, our Governments and, finally, a number of eminent persons who have immortalized the equality, human rights and, above all, the dignity of persons with disabilities.

My delegation wishes to explain its position on one issue of far-reaching importance for our country. Honduras accepts the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" as used in article 25 (a) with the understanding that it does not include abortion and does not constitute recognition of any obligation under international law or human rights law. The internal legal framework in my country is very clear on this point. We wish this interpretation that we are giving today to be placed on record and in the final report of this session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Solórzano (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the adoption of the Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. It has just been adopted by this General Assembly, thus marking an historic moment for humankind in the defence of human rights for the most vulnerable.

However, my delegation, under precise instructions from my Government, wishes to make an interpretive statement concerning subparagraph (a) of article 25 on sexual and reproductive health.

In that particular regard, my delegation notes that it accepts the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" on the understanding that it does not cover abortion and that its use in the article implies no right to abortion. Thus, it should not be interpreted as meaning approval, support or promotion of abortion.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya attaches particular importance to the rights of persons with disabilities and is proud that there is no discrimination in its legislation with respect to the rights of persons with disabilities and other persons.

We are therefore pleased today to have adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We believe that the Convention will help to facilitate the exercise by persons with disabilities of their rights internationally and will help to strengthen human rights in general.

At the same time, the Libyan delegation reiterates that it has joined the consensus on the basis of its interpretation of paragraph 2 of article 12, as explained by the representative of Iraq speaking earlier on behalf of the Arab countries. Furthermore, the Libyan delegation understands the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" referred to in subparagraph (a) of article 25 not to signify any activity that would conflict with the moral principles of Muslim and national legislation, including abortion, which is prohibited except under very specific circumstances.

Mr. Miller (United States of America): The United States welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The United States was pleased to participate actively in the Ad Hoc Committee, including through providing technical assistance on our national law and policy related to disabilities and information about our foreign assistance programmes in that area. We also held side events on matters of interest and regularly briefed the community of non-governmental organizations on our activities. We congratulate and warmly thank all those involved in this monumental and historic process, including the Ad Hoc Committee chairpersons Ambassador MacKay of New Zealand and Ambassador Gallegos of Ecuador, their respective staffs, bureau members, the Secretariat, and members of civil society.

Our nation's commitment to the rights and dignities of persons with disabilities is embodied in our vast array of strong national laws, notably the historic Americans with Disabilities Act. The United States has shown strong leadership in combating discrimination and inequality on the basis of disability. In 2001, President Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative, designed to expand the potential for persons with disabilities to access technologies, education, workplace, and home-ownership opportunities.

The United States believes that the most effective way for States to improve the real-world situation of persons with disabilities from a legal perspective is to strengthen their domestic legal frameworks related to non-discrimination and equality. That approach is rooted in our own national experience with legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. We hope that the Convention will assist States in that process at the national level.

There is much to be proud of in the Convention. It is based on respect for the inherent dignity and worth of all persons with disabilities. It contains strong provisions on a variety of important issues, including political participation, access to justice, accessibility, health, the crucial role of family, and end-of-life issues.

The Convention is firmly rooted in the principles of equality and non-discrimination. As the Chairperson and many other delegations, including that of the United States, have noted on countless occasions over the course of negotiations, the treaty reinforces existing rights and is aimed at assuring that persons with disabilities will be treated on an equal basis with others. That approach was reflected in oral statements and in various places in the written *travaux préparatoires*, including in a footnote to the draft text of article 25 that appeared in the report of the seventh session of the Ad Hoc Committee.

In that regard, the United States understands that the phrase "reproductive health" in subparagraph (a) of article 25 of the draft Convention does not include abortion, and that its use in that article does not create any abortion rights and cannot be interpreted to constitute support, endorsement or promotion of abortion. We stated that understanding at the time of adoption of the Convention in the Ad Hoc Committee, and note that no other delegation suggested a different understanding of that term.

We would also like to comment on preambular paragraph (u) of the Convention. The United States called for a separate vote on that paragraph and voted against it because we saw it as an attempt to politicize what had otherwise been a very productive and focused negotiation process. We were also concerned that the reference in this human rights Convention to armed conflict and foreign occupation, which are governed by international humanitarian law and not by human rights law, would create unnecessary legal confusion and thus potentially undermine the extensive protections already available under international humanitarian law to protected persons in those situations. The United States wishes to note for the official record its continued concerns related to that preambular paragraph in the Convention. We note that those concerns also apply to article 11, which deals with situations of armed conflict.

My delegation reiterates its congratulations to all involved in this very significant process.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

We will now hear statements after the adoption, to be delivered by delegations from their seats.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): New Zealand has been pleased to join the consensus in support of the resolution.

The adoption of this Convention by the General Assembly marks the end of a journey that the United Nations embarked on in 2001. For the international disability community, it has been a much longer journey. Disability organizations within civil society have long been pressing for a convention dealing specifically with the rights of persons with disabilities.

It is no secret that some Governments had some initial reservations about the need to negotiate a major new human rights convention, particularly given the resources required for such a process. Theoretically there was no need for a new convention, because the existing human rights instruments apply to persons with disabilities in just the same way that they do to everyone else. The reality, unfortunately, has not followed the theory. The existing human rights instruments have fallen far short in their protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed to persons with disabilities.

This does not mean that States have deliberately avoided their obligations. But many of the obligations under other instruments are set out in quite a broad and generic way, which can leave grey areas for their practical implementation in respect of particular groups. Often, too, the enjoyment of rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities may require some adaptation by States to accommodate the disability in question. And unfortunately, persons with disabilities have often been marginalized and discriminated against in our societies.

The dismaying statistics compiled by the United Nations and the specialized agencies on the situation of persons with disabilities worldwide leave no doubt that specific action needed to be taken. And those of us who participated in the negotiations were certainly left in no doubt as to why this Convention is needed. The candid and informative contributions of civil society — specifically the disability organizations — have been invaluable in opening our eyes and reaffirming why our task was so crucial. Once that hurdle had been overcome and there was acceptance of the need for a convention, all of the participants — States and civil society — worked tirelessly together to achieve a worthy outcome.

New Zealand is confident that the Convention is a worthy outcome, and that it will make a significant difference to the 10 per cent of the world's people who live with a disability. It is a practically focused Convention, because it has been so closely informed and influenced by the experiences of persons with disabilities worldwide, as represented by their organizations. They clearly articulated the challenges, difficulties and requirements of persons with disabilities in their interaction with society at large, and it is those areas — and they are myriad — on which the Convention focuses. It will be the benchmark for future standards and action. Attitudes need to change, societies need to be more inclusive and accessible and persons with disabilities need to be more empowered. The Convention enshrines themes such as those.

The key, of course, will be effective implementation. For that, we need to bring the Convention into force as quickly as possible, and with 20 States parties required, the threshold is relatively low. With the formal adoption of the Convention by this Assembly this morning, Governments now need to move quickly to enact any necessary legislation, take the necessary constitutional or administrative steps and sign and ratify the Convention. It would be a travesty if, following the adoption of the Convention, treaty action is allowed to languish and persons with disabilities yet again find themselves at the back of the queue for Government attention.

Effective implementation will also require effective and coordinated action by disability organizations, which we have seen work so well in the negotiations. It will require cooperation among States and the mainstreaming of disabilities issues into development assistance programmes. Again, this is covered in the Convention.

In conclusion, may I say that it has been a privilege for me, as the representative of New Zealand, to have been closely involved in these negotiations, initially as Chairman of the Working Group and coordinator of the informal negotiations, and subsequently as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. I would like to place on record our huge debt of gratitude for the extraordinarily hard work of those involved in the process, particularly the Bureau — no Bureau has ever served a process better — the Chair of the drafting group, who worked so expertly, the Chair of the negotiations on monitoring and the many others who chaired and facilitated groups on a wide variety of issues, as well as for the support of the Secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I should also like to acknowledge the excellent work done by my predecessor in the chairmanship, Ambassador Gallegos, who is here today. And on this, the occasion of the adoption of the Convention, we could not fail to mention one country that has been pivotal in keeping the process alive. That is, of course, Mexico, which I would like specifically to acknowledge.

In my role as Chairman, I have had strong support from the New Zealand Government, which has been thoroughly committed to this process, including the Minister for Disability Issues, The Honourable Ruth Dyson, and other colleagues from New Zealand. Finally, may I express wholehearted thanks to all of the participants in the negotiations, from States and from civil society, for the highly constructive, positive and supportive approach that they have consistently taken.

Mr. Gallardo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The United Nations has taken an historic step by adopting this Convention and its Optional Protocol, which bridge a gap in the international legal framework. Mexico welcomes the successful completion of this process, which began five years ago with the goal of responding to the legitimate and long-standing demands of persons with disabilities throughout the world.

On behalf of my Government and my country, I would like to congratulate the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Don McKay of New Zealand, who guided the work with exceptional skill and great dedication. My appreciation goes also to Ambassador Luis Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador, who chaired the Committee in its first years with outstanding commitment.

My delegation would also like to commend the participatory and transparent nature of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee. The instrument that we have adopted today would not been possible without the participation and input of civil society, with which States have worked in true partnership, thereby providing a particularly constructive momentum to the process. We trust that the collaboration will continue during the stages leading to the signature and ratification of the Convention and, in particular, to its implementation in all States.

The new Convention consolidates the Organization's efforts to promote human rights, which belong at the very core of Mexican foreign policy, and the social participation of persons with disabilities throughout its history.

The Convention is a milestone that will without doubt change the lives of persons with disabilities and contribute to building societies that are more just and equal, as it is the first legally binding international instrument on the issue at hand and to include the full range of human rights, as well as the measures needed to guarantee them. It is strengthened by its monitoring mechanism, which is at the same level as those of other international human rights treaties. That will allow us to ensure the application of the Convention and to identify the main challenges to its implementation, including through international cooperation and collaboration with civil society and other actors of the international community.

I would like to emphasize that the Convention contributes to fostering a new perspective on this issue. We must consolidate a cultural change in our societies regarding the way we address the situation of persons with disabilities. Indeed, the treaty moves beyond the medical welfare model in order fully to recognize persons with disabilities as rights-holders and active members of society with full autonomy and freedom to make their own choices.

A significant part of our task is concluded today, and we should without question be satisfied with the quality of the treaty adopted. We should also bear in mind that this is only the first among a series of measures that we will need to undertake in order to make sure that the letter and spirit of the Convention are translated into concrete results by States parties. To that end, we count on the full support of the Secretary-General and all the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to disseminate the Convention as widely as possible and to contribute to its implementation. Mexico trusts that the treaty will enjoy the necessary ratifications to enter into force as soon as possible, so that it may be put into practice.

In that sense, I am pleased to announce that my country's Congress has called for Mexico to sign and ratify the Convention at the earliest possible date, aware that it will benefit the 10 million Mexicans with disabilities. Along those lines, I note that our competent national institutions will undertake the necessary actions for the implementation of the Convention in the broadest, fullest and most expeditious way possible.

I express our thanks and appreciation for this unprecedented endeavour, which fulfils a debt to 650 million people who have unfairly remained invisible. The world is celebrating. Mexico is celebrating, too, and is grateful to the world.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process; potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; and Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union would like to join other delegations in congratulating all of us, representatives and members of civil society, for having concluded, in a relatively short period of time, the negotiations on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We wish to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador MacKay, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. Without his dedication, commitment and determination, not to mention his competent guidance through this sometimes very difficult process, we would not have had such an open, transparent and fully inclusive process, and we would certainly not be here today with a Convention.

We also wish to thank the members of civil society who have been participating in large numbers in the process throughout the years in accordance with the principle "nothing about us without us". Without their valuable input and their intimate knowledge of life with disabilities, the Convention would not have as much value as it does now.

Equally, we wish to thank all the representatives who participated in the long hours of drafting and negotiating on all various issues, regardless of the time and place, and who, often through difficult compromises, were able to reach consensus on the text of the Convention.

Finally, on a substantive matter, we wish to refer to the interpretative statement made by some States regarding paragraph 2 of article 12 of the Convention. It is our understanding that the concept of legal capacity has the same meaning in all language versions.

We hope that, through the adoption and wide ratification of the Convention in the near future and through the awareness-raising this process has been, the 650 million persons with disabilities in the world will have a better future with respect to their enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

Through all these years, we have been saying that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Now that time has come, and everything has been agreed.

Mrs. Maierá (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and its associated States: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and Brazil.

We take this opportunity to welcome the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

Our regional group participated with great commitment in the negotiating process that resulted in the instruments we have just adopted. Our countries have taken a social and inclusive approach to the issue of persons with disabilities. We therefore based our participation on the understanding that disability results from the interaction between physical impairments and environmental barriers, which impedes the full participation of individuals in society. We are convinced that this Convention and its Optional Protocol will serve as essential instruments for the elimination of such barriers and for the promotion of inclusive development, thus generating the necessary changes which will guarantee the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities on an equal footing with other people.

In addition, we are gratified to recognize the positive outcome of the negotiations on an effective monitoring mechanism, which ensures that the Convention will have at its disposal the same tools as other human rights instruments.

Lastly, in our view, the fact that the negotiating process was conducted in an open and transparent manner is of great importance. The interaction with civil society was particularly relevant, which is why our countries supported such full participation, including in the informal meetings of our regional group, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. We consider it essential that civil society, and in particular organizations of persons with disabilities, should remain involved in the new phase that begins today: of that dissemination and implementation of the Convention. Their participation will be essential for this instrument to generate the debate and reflection at the national level needed to foster the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in all our societies.

Mrs. Mladineo (Croatia): I am speaking on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first human rights treaty of the twenty-first century. That is why the Eastern European Group is pleased that the Convention was drafted with unprecedented participation by civil society, particularly persons with disabilities and their organizations.

The Eastern European Group believes that this Convention will increase the level of inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, helping them to become more contributing members of their communities. It will also help us reach some of the Millennium Development Goals to which we have committed ourselves.

Today, having adopted this significant Convention that means so much to millions of disabled persons and their families around the world, let us not forget that it is now equally important for the international community to continue with the process of signing, ratifying and implementing the Convention with the same persistence and dedication.

By adopting this Convention, we, the Members of the United Nations, are sending an important message to the world. We unanimously state that our countries are serious when dealing with the human rights of persons with disabilities. Let us remember that the level of civilization is often measured by the level of rights that world leaders give to the weakest in their societies. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is definitely a step further in raising this level.

Mr. Ballestero (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, allow me, first of all, to express my thanks to you for having convened this meeting of the General Assembly to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This event is the culmination of a series of individual and collective efforts that together have yielded an international legal instrument of which all of us in this Hall can, and should, be proud.

Since its establishment more than 60 years ago, this Organization has had at its core a profound belief in human rights, in the dignity and value of the human person, in the equality of men and women and in the equality of nations, irrespective of their size and power. This is clearly stated in its Charter.

The peoples of the United Nations declared in 1945 their determination to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom for all persons and, to that end, they committed themselves to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. This combination of beliefs and commitments to human rights and development, individual responsibility and international cooperation, which is part of the Charter of the United Nations, is today reflected, articulated and developed in the Convention that we have just adopted. It is an ambitious instrument, befitting the twenty-first century, which discards the rigid dogmas of past while benefiting to the full from lessons learned in the hard task of forging our humanity.

We have been fortunate enough to be able to participate in something which, without any exaggeration, may be described as a journey of hope, a journey to which we were first convoked by Mexico and in which we were then steered by Ecuador. The journey was begun by the Latin American and Caribbean Group. It then became a journey for the whole of the developing world, until it became, today, an initiative taken by the whole world.

Today, we celebrate together the culmination of this process. The Convention is testimony to our finest virtues and our best aspirations. It is resounding proof of what we are capable of as an international society, when we concentrate on our points of convergence and not on our differences.

According to United Nations data, more than 650 million people — 10 per cent of the world's population — have reason to celebrate with us today. They have all the more reason to continue more energetically than ever to pursue this journey of hope in which we have had the privilege to participate. Today, the whole of humanity is more humane.

Major achievements of this instrument include surmounting forever the medical model of disability; the unequivocal recognition that disability generates poverty and that poverty generates disability; and the commitment to struggle to overcome our prejudice and preconceptions and to promote a paradigm shift which is needed to achieve inclusive development and ultimately active participation by civil society. Costa Rica believes that the Convention is a triumph for humanity as a whole.

Costa Rica believes that the dignity and value of the human being transcend life's circumstances and the challenges that life presents day by day. Thus, in hailing the comprehensive and all-embracing nature of this Convention, we would like to reaffirm that — as was reflected during the debates in the Ad Hoc Committee — the reference in the Convention to the concept of sexual and reproductive health does not constitute a new human right or, still less, imply relativization or negation of the right to life, which we regard as the source of all rights.

More than 60 years ago, a wheelchair user stated, in circumstances that were certainly far from happy, that the only thing that we had to fear was fear itself. A few years later, having amply proved the truth of that assertion, the same person laid the foundations of this Organization; thanks to him, we can meet today to rejoice in this historic moment. In adopting the Convention, Costa Rica pays tribute to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose life and work demonstrated all that can be done and, at the same time, everything that remains to be done, individually and collectively, to advance and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Without distinction as to language, culture, religion or civilization, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities represents, in its entirety and for all the peoples of the world, a significant advance. Its conceptual and paradigmatic integrity should not be compromised by short-sighted analyses or highly legalistic approaches. It is an instrument of human rights, as well as of social development and international cooperation. It is a commitment undertaken by States but fulfilled by individuals. Let us all live up to our commitments and the aspirations reflected in the Convention. Only on the basis of prompt and effective implementation will we be able to reach the end of our journey.

In the information age and in the global village of which we are all part, the measures we take in this Hall are known and have immediate effect in all corners of the world, especially in small places where human rights have real meaning and impact. That is why my delegation hopes that we will never again build — especially using resources earmarked for development — facilities, institutions or services that exclude a priori 10 per cent of the population. No country, however rich, can afford to squander its human resources.

The success of a journey depends to a large extent on the helmsman of the chosen vessel. A skilful, careful and visionary navigator who is sure and resolute is vital to reaching the destination and, in particular, to doing so on schedule. On this voyage of hope, we have had the good fortune of being able to rely on the ideal navigator, Ambassador Don MacKay of New Zealand. His experience and skill, together with his interpersonal gifts and his great human warmth, have enormously benefited our deliberations, marshalled our energies and allowed us to adopt the Convention today by consensus. Our recognition and gratitude also go to his team and to his predecessor, Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador, and his team.

The German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht said that there are men who fight one day and are good; there are men who fight one year and are better; there are some who fight many years and they are better still; but there are some that fight their whole lives, and these are the indispensable. For us, without doubt, it is among the latter that we place all persons with disabilities. We owe them our recognition.

Allow me to end by recalling, with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that the only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strength and faith in the future.

Ms. Lazouras (South Africa): My Government would like to express its pleasure that, after five years of negotiations, the General Assembly is adopting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol within the prescribed time frame, as per General Assembly resolution 60/232 of December 2005. South Africa celebrates its adoption, as it represents a victory for human rights.

The treaty, the first of its kind, sets internationally binding provisions that promote and protect the rights of a long-neglected section of the world's population, whose social and economic integration would benefit humanity. The entry into force of the Convention and its Optional Protocol would ensure that persons with disabilities no longer represented one of the most marginalized groups and that their rights were no longer routinely ignored or denied throughout the world.

Special recognition should be given to Ambassador Don MacKay of New Zealand and his predecessor, Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador, whose work as Chairs of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities enabled the speedy and successful conclusion of this historic Convention. The Ad Hoc Committee was a unique negotiating forum for both Member States and civil society, as they proved that no disability could be a hindrance to advancing diplomacy at this body.

South Africa is certain that, through the knowledge and experience accumulated during the proceedings of the Ad Hoc Committee, the United Nations system has become less disabling. My delegation proposes that the United Nations, in its reform process, give consideration to provisions on inclusiveness and equality that are contained in the Convention. The United Nations should, in its reform process, implement creative systems in order to reduce or even eliminate altogether the environment that inhibits the effective participation by persons with disabilities in its events and processes and when undertaking renovations.

South Africa would have preferred that the provisions on individual communication and complaints procedure contained in the Optional Protocol to the Convention be part of the Convention itself. However, we acknowledge that an optional protocol approach was the best compromise to ensure the universal acceptance of the Convention and thus fast track its ratification and entry into force.

South Africa has started the necessary process in preparation for the signing of both the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. South Africa will soon thereafter initiate internal processes with a view to ratifying both those treaties.

South Africa urges Member States to consider both signing and ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol, because that will ensure that its implementation and monitoring by the Committee under the Convention are enhanced. Our understanding is that, although the two treaties are separated, they are both aimed at advancing the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities in a mutually reinforcing manner. Therefore, my delegation is of the view that the Convention's provisions cannot be achieved in isolation of the Optional Protocol.

The Optional Protocol gives an implementation force to the Convention because it provides recourse for those whose rights may be under threat or undermined. The Optional Protocol would also provide the Committee with proactive means to seek further information on the status of the human rights of persons with disabilities through the inquiries procedures. Those procedures can be useful instruments for the protection of persons with disabilities and may allow for the provision of technical assistance to States parties on emerging best practices.

In conclusion, my delegation recognizes that persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized of all peoples and have been excluded from achieving their full potential by a wide range of physical, legal and social barriers. However, we also acknowledge that the Convention will pave the way to ensuring that both States and public perception of persons with disabilities change to allow for the full integration of persons with disabilities into society.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At this sixty-first session, the General Assembly has just adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is a milestone in the history of the protection of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities. The Convention is the outcome of the strong political will and hard work of the international community, and reflects the constructive and cooperative approach of all negotiating parties.

The Chinese delegation welcomes the adoption of the Convention. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Don Mackay, and his predecessor for their efforts.

The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the protection of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, as well as to the guarantee of their social welfare. According to a recently conducted nation-wide census on persons with disabilities, China has almost 83 million persons with disabilities. Over the years, the Chinese Government has established and gradually improved our system for safeguarding the human rights of persons with disabilities, thus helping them to participate in social life and to share the fruits of social development on an equal footing. This year, the Chinese Government promulgated and put into practice the China Development Outline for the Cause of Persons with Disabilities (2006-2010) with the aim of establishing rehabilitation services for all and other goals in that area.

China was one of the first countries to initiate and promote the formulation of the Convention. Over the past five years, the Chinese delegation has taken an active part in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Convention and made its due contribution. In order to complete the drafting of the Convention on time, many delegations, including mine, did their best to demonstrate flexibility on some contentious issues in the Convention during consultations. We are deeply convinced that the adoption of the Convention will contribute to a helpful conceptual, policy and legal framework for the efforts of the international community to protect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities.

The Chinese delegation would like to reiterate its interpretation of the term "legal capacity" in article 12 of the Convention. The Chinese Government interprets "legal capacity" in the Convention as "legal capacity for rights". The Chinese delegation requests that this statement be included in the official summary record of current meeting.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Uganda welcomes the adoption of the Convention. We would like to salute all those who worked very hard to bring about this happy result.

It is not by choice that some people suffer disability of one form or another. All human beings should be accorded the same rights and privileges regardless of their physical condition. It is only just to do so. The Convention is therefore long overdue, but better late than never.

The Convention, besides providing access to education, transportation and justice for disabled persons, also prohibits discrimination based on sexual and reproductive health. My delegation, however, wants to emphasize that our understanding of the phrase "sexual and reproductive health services" does not constitute recognition of any new international legal obligations or human rights and that, more specifically, it does not include abortion.

Mr. Limeres (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina aligns itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the Common Market of the South and associated States, and welcomes the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, the first international instrument dealing specifically with the protection of the human rights of that vulnerable group.

The delegation of Argentina was actively involved throughout the negotiations that took place in the Ad Hoc Committee, supporting at all times the widest possible participation of duly accredited non-governmental organizations devoted to disabilities issues. We consider it indispensable to take into account the points of view, concerns and input of civil society on that topic. In that regard, and bearing in mind the ongoing dialogue that the Argentine Government maintains with civil society, the delegation of Argentina relied on the valuable contributions of representatives of two non-governmental organizations as advisers during the negotiation of the Convention.

Furthermore, Argentina's commitment to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities has also been evident in the inter-American sphere. Thus, at the thirty-sixth regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, which took place in June 2006, Argentina sponsored a resolution, adopted by consensus, through which the States of the region reaffirmed their commitment to the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups in a situation of vulnerability, among them persons with disabilities. Resolution AG/RES 2167 seeks to ensure the activation of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, taking into account the contributions of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and of civil society organizations specializing in disability issues.

Argentina welcomes this new contribution of the General Assembly to the progressive development of international human rights law through this new legal instrument, which reflects the need for world awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, with the commitment and obligation of each of our States, as established in article 8 of the instrument we have adopted today.

Mr. Mercado (Philippines): The Philippines welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as its Optional Protocol. We congratulate Ambassador Don MacKay and the members of the Ad Hoc Committee on their hard work in making the Convention a reality.

My delegation takes the floor to highlight three important issues.

First, when the General Assembly formally embarked on a course to draft a convention on disabilities, it originally intended for the Convention to be a comprehensive and integral instrument that would uplift the lives of all persons with disabilities. That was why we used the lengthy title of the draft convention in all eight negotiation sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee. While, for brevity's sake, we have adopted the present title, it is the Philippines' understanding that this does not detract from the holistic nature and character of the Convention originally intended by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/168, which embodies, in a unified way, the perspectives of development, human rights and non-discrimination, covering all countries, developed and developing alike. That particular holistic approach is reflected in many of the preambular paragraphs, but in particular in paragraphs (f) and (y). The holistic approach is also the spirit behind article 32 on international cooperation. Let it therefore be remembered that what we have adopted is an instrument that embodies that holistic nature.

Secondly, it is the policy of the Philippines to value the dignity of every human person and to guarantee full respect for human rights. The Philippines ensures that persons with disabilities, as members of society, exercise the same rights and obligations as all others. Hence, where a person's capacity to exercise his or her rights may be restricted under certain circumstances, adequate safeguards under our laws are employed to ensure that he or she is still able to fully exercise those rights, including, if necessary, with the assistance of others. In article 12 of the Convention, the Philippines understands the term "legal capacity" under the terms of the Philippine Civil Code, which makes a distinction between the terms "legal capacity" and the "capacity to act". Under the Philippine Civil Code, "capacity to act" refers to the power to do acts with legal effect and to the aptitude for the exercise of rights. On the other hand, the term "legal capacity", under our Civil Code, is synonymous with juridical capacity and is defined as the fitness of the person to be the subject of legal relations. For purposes of domestic implementation, the term "legal capacity" in article 12 shall therefore be construed by the Philippines as the "capacity to act".

Lastly, the Philippines considers it highly important to ensure the total health of persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, the Philippines is of the belief that the provision of health care and all other services should not in any way undermine the right to life of a person, with or without a disability, in all stages of his or her being. It is in that light that the Philippines understands articles 12 and 25 of the Convention.

Mr. Labbé (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to associate itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the Common Market of the South and its associated States.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities marks the successful conclusion of a lengthy process begun in 2002 with the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee responsible for its negotiation. The process has involved Governments and, very significantly, civil society through non-governmental organizations, which played a distinguished role in the Convention's development. Some representatives of those non-governmental organizations have honoured us today with their presence in the Hall.

Many Government delegations, including that of Chile, included persons with disabilities among their members in the negotiating process explicitly to give concrete form to the principle of inclusion.

At the same time, the adoption of the Convention is a very positive contribution to the array of international human rights instruments adopted in the legal and normative framework of the United Nations, beginning in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

When we speak of disability, we are talking about a population of over 500 million people throughout the world who suffer some degree of disability and are thereby the subjects of discrimination or excluded from participating in the social, labour, educational, cultural or health fields. That is why the Convention that we have just adopted seeks as its primary goal the promotion, protection and guarantee of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities, on an equal footing with all others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, while also promoting respect for their inherent dignity. We note with satisfaction that the Government programme launched by President Michelle Bachelet contains specific commitments with respect to disability that are fully in keeping with the rights of such persons recognized by the Convention.

The Convention strives to find a way to ensure the full application to persons with disabilities of duly recognized and established fundamental human rights, bearing in mind the specifics of each situation. Among its underlying principles, the Convention recognizes the inherent dignity of individuals; individual autonomy, including the freedom to take one's own decisions; independence; non-discrimination; participation and full and effective inclusion in society; and access to and equality of opportunity.

On the basis of those principles, the Convention breaks with many erroneous or risky approaches, such as the segregation of persons with disabilities by means of differentiated education and other special regimes, and lack of recognition of their individuality and autonomy of action, conceiving of them as legally incapable. The Convention recognizes persons with disabilities as legal persons on the same terms as others in all aspects of life, making them not only the holders but also the exercisers of rights.

For those very reasons, the Convention's entry into force will oblige our Governments and societies to adopt a new approach to that reality. Legislation will be required in various spheres fully and effectively to implement the commitments undertaken here. Access will also have to be guaranteed to persons with disabilities to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and other services and facilities available to the public. For its part, society will have to begin to consider the situation as yet another expression of its own diversity and to accept that persons with disabilities deserve equal and non-discriminatory treatment, even when it may be based on supposedly protective criteria.

The Convention, however, also speaks to another reality that links it to issues of social development. An extremely high percentage of persons with disabilities live in developing countries and in poverty. Moreover, a large percentage of persons with disabilities have practically no schooling. In the area of employment, the unemployment indices for persons with disabilities are also extremely high.

Facilitating the equal access of persons with disabilities to various social activities will enable them to achieve higher levels of income, thus improving their educational, employment and health opportunities. That task also involves responsibility for Governments, which they must assume. My delegation expresses its wholehearted commitment to ensuring that the various tasks set out in this important instrument will be fully undertaken.

I cannot conclude without conveying my delegation's warmest congratulations to all of those who, in various forums and from a variety of work and observational backgrounds, have allowed us to achieve an ethical, diplomatic and legal victory of the highest magnitude. Our thanks go in particular to Ambassadors Luis Gallegos of Ecuador, a dear friend of mine, and Don Mackay of New Zealand, as well as to the other members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Mr. Petranto (Indonesia): Indonesia has the honour to join other delegations in welcoming today's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

The Convention is certainly an important milestone in the efforts of the United Nations to address the rights of persons with disabilities. Not only will it send out a message of hope to the millions of disabled around the world, but we also trust that it will help to raise people's awareness and promote the rights and dignity of the disabled in their countries.

We congratulate all those who participated in shaping the Convention and its Optional Protocol. The role of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee was instrumental and my delegation congratulates him on successfully guiding the work of the Committee and concluding the Convention and Optional Protocol.

In the process of developing and negotiating the Convention, we appreciate the valuable contribution of civil society in enriching the process by bringing to the table its extensive knowledge and expertise on the issue of disabilities.

In realizing the purpose and objectives of the Convention, my delegation would like to underline article 32, which provides for international cooperation to assist countries in complying with the provisions of the Convention. In that regard, my delegation wishes to emphasize the importance of building partnerships nationally, regionally and globally in the implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Cordovez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is a great day for humankind. It is also an historic date in the evolution of the United Nations. The General Assembly's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is taking place 60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 40 after the adoption of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Ecuadorian delegation participated ardently and with conviction in the preparatory work for the Convention. The international community has now assumed its responsibility to enable persons with disabilities fully to enjoy their rights as members of society. The Convention represents the culmination of a gradual evolution in the worldwide process of reform in the area of disability, the ultimate articulation of the universal nature of human dignity, and the creation of a system of freedoms built on human values.

Disabled individuals are now the holders of rights that restore their autonomy and give them space to develop their creativity and spirit. That global development for persons with disabilities has already had an impact on the evolution of national social models. Sixty years ago — nay, only 20 years ago — families concealed their disabled members. Children were forgotten in back rooms and young people were interned in hospitals for the mentally ill or in remote asylums. That is in clear contrast to the current situation, which has undoubtedly been impelled by the humanitarian process in the United Nations.

Just a few days ago in my country, a professional person who has been confined to a wheelchair for a number of years was elected Vice-President of the Republic, the second-ranking leader of our nation. Humankind owes such recognition to all human beings who have been rejected for their disabilities. It is plain that our approach acknowledges the impact of such disabilities or insufficiencies on a person's daily life.

That is why this is a day of rejoicing for all humankind. We have demonstrated a solidarity that is missing from the human rights codes which our Organization has been adopting virtually since its inception. Ecuador is participating with profound political will in that celebration.

Ms. Feldman (Israel): On the behalf of the State of Israel, my delegation would like to express its joy in participating in the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which indeed is a momentous occasion. My delegation would also like to express gratitude to our colleagues in the United Nations, Member States and civil society who were involved in initiating, drafting and bringing to completion this historic Convention.

For the hundreds of millions of persons with disabilities living across the world and who still must cope with conditions of poverty, discrimination, humiliation and exclusion, the adoption of this Convention by the General Assembly is a reaffirmation that all human beings were created equally in the image of God. We in Israel fondly remember having those same feelings of joy and satisfaction when we passed the Equal Rights for People with Disabilities Law in 1998, enacted extensive provisions concerning the accessibility of public accommodations in 2005, and established the Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities as part of the Ministry of Justice in August 2000.

Once our celebrations here have concluded, the Convention, like other conventions and pieces of legislation, will be judged solely on the basis of its implementation. Many of us know only too well the challenges of changing attitudes and practices among policymakers, professionals, the general public and even among persons with disabilities themselves. We must ensure that the responsibility to guarantee the rights of all human beings is internalized and protected by all.

This is a process requiring a great deal of learning and openness to accepting the other as an essential part of society. It is a process that demands not only a heightening of awareness and mutual respect, but also the investment of financial and human resources in making every aspect of society accessible to all. It is a process of democratization, calling for the establishment of partnerships between professionals and people with disabilities at crucial decision-making points on the journey towards the realization of the goals of the Convention.

The State of Israel, which was actively involved in the formulation of the Convention, is committed to advancing the rights of person with disabilities, and several steps have already been initiated in Israel with a view to promoting the implementation of the Convention. We have begun to review our own domestic legislation in the light of the wide-ranging provisions of the Convention. Our Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities is working on the establishment of disability studies centres, which will train and teach professionals in public and civil society about the principles and practices of implementing the Convention. The Commission is also in the process of developing a quantitative monitoring mechanism to enable us to track the implementation progress of our domestic equal rights law, together with the provisions of the Convention. To that effect, we have already translated the Convention into Hebrew and will distribute it to relevant entities now that it has been adopted.

While commending the impressive work of those involved in bringing the Convention to successful completion, we echo the concern also raised by other delegations and express our regret at certain elements of politicization during the drafting process, particularly with respect to preambular paragraph (u). The attempt to draw artificial parallels between two different legal regimes under international law — those of human rights law and the law of armed conflict — only undermines the effectiveness of each regime. Israel would therefore like to place on record its concern regarding references in the Convention to elements taken from the law of armed conflict.

In conclusion, let us all — Governments and civil society alike — advance forward in taking the necessary steps towards implementation of the Convention. Israel, for its part, is open both to contributing on the basis of our own experience, as well as to learning from the experience of others. Let us continue with the positive and cooperative spirit of the Ad Hoc Committee that was initiated by the Mexican Government and inspired by our Chairs, Ambassador Luis Gallegos and Ambassador Don Mackay. We owe them a great deal, as we do many, many others.

In our tradition, we have a practice of reciting a blessing of thanksgiving and for future success upon occasions of great accomplishment: Blessed be the one who sustained us and brought us to this joyous occasion.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a historic achievement. My delegation is very satisfied to see that the General Assembly was able to negotiate such a comprehensive document of such quality in such a short time, and we are very proud that we were able to make our contribution to that outcome.

The adoption coincides nicely with the day on which we will also be discussing the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly in the afternoon. In our view, today's result represents true General Assembly revitalization. It was possible thanks to the commitment and constructive spirit of delegations, the invaluable contribution of persons with disabilities and their organizations, and the strong leadership of individuals, in particular of Ambassador Don MacKay, to whom we owe much gratitude. The involvement of civil society and of the persons directly affected should serve as an example for similar processes in the future, such as the resumed work on the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

We hope that the Convention will soon enjoy universal participation and that each article will be fully implemented in all parts of the world, irrespective of any difficulties that might be encountered in the translation of the negotiated text. We owe nothing less to the 650 million persons with disabilities worldwide.

Implementation is indeed crucial when it comes to the protection and promotion of human rights. Our work on standard-setting must never dilute the focus we place on the implementation of existing standards and cannot conceal the fact that implementation is the area in which we are most at fault and have the most to increase our efforts.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Colombia welcomes the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. We pay tribute to Ambassador Don MacKay of New Zealand and his predecessor, the Ambassador of Ecuador.

My country played an active role in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee and is pleased to see the significant outcome of its work. We note that in Colombia, on the initiative of the Vice-President of the Republic and in coordination with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, a working group was established among representatives of various Government agencies, civil society organizations working in the field of health care and the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, and academic sectors to follow up and consider progress in the formulation of the text of the Convention. Colombia made its position clear in all of the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee. The contributions of civil society organizations to the Convention were vital to creating an instrument to provide concrete and relevant responses in this area.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe) Vice-President, took the Chair.

Regarding the substance of the Convention, we understand that, under article 24, States shall be responsible for providing persons with disabilities primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live. Similarly, article 25 on health establishes several norms whereby, in addition to the special services required by persons with disabilities specifically because of their disabilities, States shall provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programmes as provided to other persons. The cost-free nature of services would depend on the availability of the State's fiscal resources.

With today's historic decision, we have taken a fundamental step towards significant progress in the changes necessary to enabling persons with disabilities to exercise their fundamental freedoms and human rights, in respect for their dignity and for their contribution to and full participation in the advances of society on a fully equal footing with other persons. My country welcomes the resolve that led to the adoption of the resolution whereby the General Assembly has adopted the Convention.

Mr. Normandin (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada is proud to have contributed to the development of international human rights law through our active participation in the Ad Hoc Committee established to negotiate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention promises to be an important tool for the promotion of the human rights of some of those most in need of such protection. We commend the spirit of compromise and hard work of the delegations involved in the Ad Hoc Committee, which ensured that the Convention was agreed upon in record time. As agreed among the representatives, while the Convention does not create new rights, it prevents discrimination so that the human rights of persons with disabilities, which are the same rights guaranteed to everyone, are understood and ensured by States. It is for that reason that we believe that the development of the Convention is long overdue.

One of the challenges to States parties to the Convention will be ensuring the appropriate standard of realization depending on the nature of the obligation. While some rights will be immediately realizable for persons with disabilities, others will be subject to a standard of progressive implementation and will therefore require investment by States to the maximum of their available resources.

The definition of disability was the subject of extensive discussion during negotiations. The result of the discussion was the inclusion in the text of a baseline for the guidance of States clearly incorporating a social, human-rights based understanding of disability. It clearly does not require that States adopt one single definition of disability in all their laws, policies and programmes. That flexible approach will allow for the evolution of this concept over time in order to reflect our changing understanding of disability and the circumstances in which persons with disabilities face discrimination.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada is pleased to welcome the strong equality rights provision and the significant contribution the Convention makes to developing the concept of reasonable accommodation, so crucial to ensuring the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society. The provision requires States to prohibit all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and clearly includes both direct and indirect discrimination. The concepts of equality and reasonable accommodation reflect substantive equality, namely, treating persons with disabilities according to their actual merits, capacities and circumstances, not on the basis of stereotypes. Substantive equality does not mean simply treating everyone in exactly the same way. Indeed, accommodating people's differences is the essence of substantive equality, and that understanding is especially key to eliminating discrimination.

Canada likewise welcomes in particular the equal recognition of persons with disabilities as persons before the law. The complexities across various legal regimes made that a particularly difficult topic of discussion during the negotiation. Through sustained effort, however, representatives arrived ultimately at a text which recognizes that persons with disabilities, like all members of society, are presumed to have legal capacity to act in all aspects of their lives. And, as with all members of society, a determination of incapacity should be based only on evidence of the individual's actual decision-making ability, rather than on the existence of a disability. Read together with the entire Convention, that provision underscores the fact that opportunities for persons with disabilities to exercise their legal capacity cannot be denied on a discriminatory basis. While the provision is not a prohibition on substitute decision-making regimes, it does place particular emphasis on the importance of supported decision-making. Finally, regardless of whether substitute or supported decision-making is involved, the provision requires that States ensure that appropriate safeguards be in place to avoid abuse.

On other issues, we have seen the introduction of a new term in the Convention through a reference to social protection in place of social security. In light of the narrow interpretation of the term "social security" in some jurisdictions, Canada was able to join consensus, given the important focus of that provision on non-discrimination.

With respect to the references to intellectual property in article 30, Canada considers that the concept of unreasonableness in paragraph 3 is linked to that of discrimination and should not be viewed as a separate and distinct criterion. A key aspect of the provision is that it is to be interpreted in a manner consistent with international law, in particular international commitments concerning intellectual property rights. Intellectual property rights have been developed to ensure that society benefits from intellectual activity. Those rights protect creators and inventors, prevent confusion and promote access for the public. Canada looks forward to working with other Governments with a view to promoting best practices pursuant to such interpretation of international norms.

Finally, I wish to comment on the articles on international monitoring. Canada has expressed all along our desire to innovate in designing an international monitoring mechanism which would serve the goal of ensuring effective and efficient monitoring of the rights contained in the Convention. We have heard delegations and representatives of non-governmental organizations expressing the opinion that the monitoring model now in the Convention would ensure that the Convention would not be a second-class citizen. Canada never quite accepted that argument. Instead, we believe that the rights of persons with disabilities would be best ensured by innovation through a linking of the existing treaty bodies through a system of experts. Nevertheless, in recognition of the time constraints, Canada joined consensus on the creation of a mechanism on the basis of the model now in the Convention, though there, too, we would have hoped for some innovation based on best practices of existing treaty bodies. We hope that the new treaty body will integrate the lessons learned over the years of operation of existing treaty bodies and we expect that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be able to make an important contribution to discussions on future treaty body reforms.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation and warm congratulations to all delegations; to our exceptional Chairs, Ambassador Gallegos and Ambassador MacKay; and to all civil society participants, including organizations of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Takase (Japan): The Government of Japan applauds the adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly, together with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

The Convention enables all persons with disabilities to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and promotes respect for their inherent dignity. Japan attaches great importance to that instrument and participated actively in the negotiations on the text that have taken place in the Ad Hoc Committee since July 2002. We highly appreciate the sustained efforts of all interested parties to bring them to a successful conclusion. We also would like to point out that civil society, and especially persons with disabilities themselves, have made a great contribution to the process by offering their special perspectives on the Convention.

On this occasion, my delegation would like to place on record the following understanding concerning certain provisions of the Convention.

First, regarding the term "persons with disabilities", we understand that there was consensus on a broad concept, rather than on a rigid definition, and that therefore a State party may stipulate its own appropriate definitions at the national level, in line with that broad concept.

Secondly, with regard to paragraph 2 of article 12, we believe that the term "legal capacity" should allow for a flexible interpretation, bearing in mind the differences in national legal systems.

Finally, in accordance with the articles on international monitoring, we are to establish a Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the near future. We welcome that decision. However, it will by no means be easy to maintain such a Committee, bearing in mind the practical difficulties that the overall treaty body system is facing due to the fragmented treaty bodies and the reporting requirements, as well as the fact that the resources of the United Nations are not unlimited. Therefore, we believe that all Member States should make every effort to maximize the efficiency of the international monitoring mechanism, bearing in mind the ongoing discussion on treaty body reform.

The adoption of the Convention should be not our last achievement in this area, but rather the first. All Member States must make further efforts to ensure and promote the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, as stipulated in the Convention. My delegation would like to express the firm intention of the Government of Japan to exert its utmost efforts to sign and ratify the Convention.

Mr. Cho Hyun (Republic of Korea): It has been four years since the Ad Hoc Committee was established to consider proposals for a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

As a country that participated actively in the discussions and negotiations during those four years aimed at drafting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Korea wholeheartedly welcomes today's adoption of the resolution upon the conclusion of the Convention and its Optional Protocol. We would also like to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador MacKay of New Zealand, who made this Convention a reality through his tireless efforts and strong leadership.

The Korean Government agrees with other Governments and with intergovernmental organizations as to the value of this unprecedented and important human rights Convention. The Convention opens a new era in the human rights arena, enabling all persons with disabilities to secure full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society. This Convention is a product of cooperation, collaboration, flexibility and compromise at their best. It would not have materialized without incessant informal discussions and intersessional exchanges of views among all the stakeholders, in particular persons with disabilities themselves.

The Republic of Korea would like to take this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to all the participants in the Ad Hoc Committee who supported the inclusion of a separate article on women with disabilities. Along with other provisions, that article will help to guarantee effective implementation and real progress in improving the situation of women with disabilities. We would also like to express our gratitude to the non-governmental organizations and civil societies of many Member States that supported our long and tortuous negotiations.

However pleased we may be by today's adoption of the Convention, we should not rest on our laurels. Much remains to be done. The close cooperation and enthusiasm shown by all the stakeholders during the negotiations of the Ad Hoc Committee must be sustained so that the words of the Convention can enter into force without delay. Raising disability issues and increasing awareness in society about this Convention should be continuously encouraged.

Korea is committed to participating actively in international endeavours to make this a Convention of persons with disabilities, by persons with disabilities and for persons with disabilities. Along with a review to effect the necessary amendment of our related domestic laws and regulations, the Korean Government plans to sign the Convention in 2007. In addition, Korea will hold a world assembly on persons with disabilities in September 2007, which will discuss follow-up steps after the Convention is adopted. Next year, at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, we hope to celebrate the Convention's entry into force.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Algeria welcomes the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. My delegation joins preceding delegations in expressing its sincere thanks to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador MacKay of New Zealand, and his predecessor, Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador, for their tireless efforts to bring about the adoption of this important and innovative instrument within a relatively short period of time. My thanks and congratulations go also to the members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee and to the civil society organizations — particularly the organizations for persons with disabilities — the persons with disabilities themselves and all others who worked tirelessly for this Convention to come into being.

We consider this success to be an important and historic step towards the recognition and rehabilitation of 10 per cent of the world's population. That represents 650 million persons with disabilities, who have long been considered a marginal fringe group of our modern societies.

Far from being an end in itself, this just recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities — which, by the way, are fundamental human rights — requires every United Nations Member State not only to subscribe to the general principles of promoting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and ensuring their full integration into society, but also to translate those principles into everyday reality.

Indeed, the quest for social cohesion and the sense of active solidarity with this category of persons must guide our actions and orient our efforts so that their lives will no longer be an endless fight for recognition and against marginalization, but rather reflect full participation in and make a substantial contribution to the economic, social and political life of their countries.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins previous speakers in welcoming today's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is a milestone that will undoubtedly change the living conditions of persons with disabilities. We hope that it will also help to build more just and equitable societies. It is the first legally binding international instrument in this area. At the same time, it incorporates a perspective of the development, promotion and protection of human rights into a single instrument.

We also wish to join others in congratulating Ambassador MacKay of New Zealand and Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador, who led our discussions. El Salvador participated responsibly in that collective effort.

We are pleased at the adoption of the text of the Convention. Despite a diversity of positions, we reached general agreement in the Ad Hoc Committee on this matter. We also had broad participation by civil society.

However, we wish to indicate the following concerning article 25 (a). El Salvador understands that the concept of sexual and reproductive health will be applied in accordance with the provisions of national legislation currently in force in that area.

Ms. Salicioni (San Marino): The Republic of San Marino would like to associate itself with the statement made by the presidency of the European Union in welcoming the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Republic of San Marino believes that this inclusive process, in accordance with the principle "nothing about us without us", has been one of the most valuable ones in the area of international law. We are certain that from now on, States parties will recognize that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life, which is as it should be.

We would like to join previous speakers in thanking Ambassador MacKay, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, and all the other facilitators, whose efforts were vital for the successful outcome of the negotiations.

In conclusion, let me just add that the Government of the Republic of San Marino intends to proceed as soon as possible with the signing and ratification of this Convention.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): On the occasion of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, my delegation would like to convey its appreciation to Ambassadors Gallegos and MacKay for their dedicated leadership during these long negotiations. Protecting the rights, dignity and worth of persons with disabilities remains a major concern for the Holy See. The Holy See, convinced that disabled individuals possess full and inalienable human rights, has consistently called for them to be completely and compassionately integrated into society. Therefore, from the very beginning, my delegation has been a constructive and active partner in these negotiations.

While there are many helpful articles in the Convention, including those that address education and the very important role of the home and the family, surely the living heart of this document lies in its reaffirmation of the right to life. For far too long, and by far too many, the lives of people with disabilities have been undervalued or thought to be of diminished dignity and worth. My delegation worked assiduously to make the text a basis upon which to reverse that assumption and to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights by people with disabilities.

That is why I would like to put on record the Holy See's position on certain provisions of the Convention.

With regard to article 18, concerning liberty of movement and nationality, and article 23, on respect for home and the family, the Holy See interprets these in a way which safeguards the primary and inalienable rights of parents.

Further, my delegation interprets all the terms and phrases regarding family planning services, regulation of fertility and marriage contained in article 23, as well as the word "gender", as it did in its reservations and statements of interpretation at the Cairo and Beijing international conferences.

Finally, and most importantly, regarding article 25 on health, and specifically the reference to sexual and reproductive health, the Holy See understands access to reproductive health as being a holistic concept that does not consider abortion or access to abortion as a dimension of those terms. Moreover, we agree with the broad consensus that was voiced during negotiations and in the context of the preparatory work done that this article does not create any new international rights and is merely intended to ensure that a person's disability is not used as a basis for denying a health service.

However, even with that understanding, we opposed the inclusion of such a phrase in this article, because in some countries reproductive health services include abortion, thus denying the inherent right to life of every human being, as affirmed by article 10 of the Convention. It is surely tragic that, wherever foetal defect is a precondition for offering or employing abortion, the same Convention created to protect persons with disabilities from all discrimination in the exercise of their rights may be used to deny the very basic right to life of disabled unborn persons.

For that reason, and despite the many helpful articles this Convention contains, the Holy See is unable to sign it.

In conclusion, my delegation considers that the positive potential of this Convention will be realized only when national legal provisions and implementation by all parties fully comply with article 10 on the right to life of disabled persons.

I ask that this statement be included in the records of this meeting.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 67.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/61/PV.77

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

77th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 13 December 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa .... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 110

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/483)

The President: Today we turn to a subject of great importance to us all and a matter of high priority for me as President of the General Assembly.

The issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly has been on the agenda of the Assembly since its forty-sixth session, in 1991. Over the past 15 years, the Assembly has raised its profile and taken on more work on a range of issues. At the same time, the Assembly has also devoted a fair amount of time to improving its efficiency and working methods.

At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. We can be proud of what we have achieved over the years, and we should remain resolved to do our utmost to respond to the needs of the peoples of the world. Since the World Summit, the General Assembly has been engaged in a very intense period of reform.

At its sixtieth and sixty-first sessions, the General Assembly agreed on various measures to strengthen the Organization. The most recent step was taken on 20 November, when the Assembly adopted by consensus the resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

In adopting these reforms, the General Assembly has demonstrated that it is prepared to take difficult decisions to better equip the United Nations to address the global issues facing us today. We also have a responsibility to monitor the implementation of our reforms. In particular, we should ensure that the newly established institutions, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, live up to their full potential.

At the World Summit, our leaders also reaffirmed the role of the Assembly in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. There are many examples of major international legal instruments that have been adopted by the General Assembly: from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted by this Assembly this morning.

As we go forward in our efforts to further revitalize the General Assembly, we should build on previous initiatives and improvements in the work of the General Assembly. During the past three sessions, a number of substantive resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly outlining measures to enhance the role and the authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Special attention has been given to streamlining the agenda of the Assembly and improving the working methods of the Main Committees. Here, I would like to express my appreciation to all the Chairpersons of the Main Committees at this session for their efforts in that regard.

The revitalization resolutions have also addressed the issue of strengthening the role and leadership of the President of the General Assembly. As a result of the reform agenda, new demands have been placed on the presidency in the past two years. Any strengthened role for the President of the General Assembly will require a reinforced Office of the President and enhanced support by Secretariat staff.

As President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Secretariat for all the support provided and to the Governments which have seconded staff to my Office. However, it has been my experience that the General Assembly, as an institution, is sometimes given unfair treatment, even within our Organization. I will make every effort to enhance the role of the Assembly, in particular regarding current issues of importance to Member States.

We need to focus more on enhancing the impact of our work on the everyday lives of the people of the world. We must strive to be on the forefront of the global agenda so that we can play a role in shaping it, not just reacting to it. We must become more focused and action-oriented in our work. And we need to enhance the visibility of our work by strengthening our efforts to tackle strategic issues, reach out to broader audiences and communicate our views.

In all aspects of our work, we need to build on our relationships with external partners, including national and regional parliaments, civil society and the private sector. One way to strengthen our relationships with other relevant actors is through interactive thematic debates, as called for in the most recent resolutions on General Assembly revitalization. As I have already informed the Assembly, it has been my intention to arrange three thematic debates during the current session. The first one was held on 27 November on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. I intend to organize two more thematic debates next spring, one on gender and development, and the other on dialogue among civilizations. I will inform the Assembly regarding the timing and arrangements for these meetings.

In resolution 60/286, the President of the General Assembly was invited to convene consultations among Member States to decide on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, open to all Member States. I intend to conduct consultations early next year on how to proceed on this important matter. I will ask for Members' views on the preferred format for taking the issue forward and on the substance we should focus our efforts on during this session.

I look forward to hearing members' views and proposals on this important subject during our deliberations today.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on agenda item 110, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The Non-Aligned Movement considers that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a key component in the overall reform of the United Nations, and its objectives should continue to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly as the principal deliberative, policymaking, standards-setting and representative organ of the United Nations.

The Non-Aligned Movement will not support any approach that seeks to undermine or that could result in undermining or minimizing the Assembly's achievements, diminishing its current role and functioning or raising questions about its relevance and credibility. The Movement calls upon all Member States to renew their commitment and political will to implement General Assembly resolutions and decisions on a non-selective and non-discriminatory basis, keeping in mind that the failure of these commitments and political will is at the root of many unresolved questions.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms the role and authority of the General Assembly, including on questions relating to international peace and security, as stipulated in Articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations, and, where appropriate, using the procedures set forth in rules 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. These rules make it possible for the Assembly to take urgent action, bearing in mind that the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

In this regard, the Movement supports the adoption of measures aimed at simplifying the procedure of the General Assembly's "Uniting for peace" resolution (377 [V] A), so as to facilitate the adoption of urgent and expeditious measures by the General Assembly. It further reiterates the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security and expresses its grave concern about instances where the Security Council fails to fulfil its primary responsibility in that regard.

The Non-Aligned Movement wishes to emphasize that in such cases where the Security Council has not fulfilled its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should take appropriate measures, in accordance with the Charter, to address this issue.

In this regard, and in accordance with the mandate given by the heads of State or Government during the fourteenth summit of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana, we are working on an appropriate draft resolution on this subject to be submitted to the General Assembly. Therefore, the Non-Aligned Movement formally requests that this agenda item be kept open so that we can submit the draft to all Member States for their consideration at a later date.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that close cooperation and coordination among all United Nations principal organs in accordance with their respective functions and powers is essential so that the United Nations can continue to be relevant and capable of facing existing threats and challenges as well as new or incipient ones. In that context, the Movement reiterates its concern about attempts to move agenda items of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council to the Security Council and it opposes the Security Council's usurpation of the functions and powers of the Assembly and other principal organs.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to meet periodically, in order to debate and coordinate among themselves the questions relative to the agenda and the working programmes of their respective organs, so as to achieve greater coherence and complementarity among them, and mutually strengthen one another while respecting the mandates of each.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement welcome the informal thematic debate held last 27 November on the role of partnerships in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the need for taking stock so as to make progress, as well as the President's intention to hold thematic debates on the questions of gender and development and dialogue among civilizations.

In paragraph 4 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 60/286, the Security Council was invited to further its initiatives to improve the quality of its annual report to the General Assembly as set forth in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, in order to provide the Assembly with a substantive and analytical report. Unfortunately, the Security Council has submitted, once again this year, a report that does not fulfil Member States' expectations, a report that is basically limited to a chronology of events and which lacks analyses and assessments.

Furthermore, the Council is still failing to submit special reports for review by the General Assembly in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter. The Non-Aligned Movement recommends that the General Assembly consider the possibility of proposing parameters for the preparation of monthly Security Council assessments so as to ensure that they are comprehensive and analytical, in contrast to current practice. We would also like to know whether the presidency of the General Assembly intends to propose any concrete measures for consultations that will make it possible for us to continue to review the Council's report, as provided for in paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 60/286.

With regard to other issues relating to the role and the authority of the Assembly, we would like to know whether the current presidency received from its predecessor a report on best practices and lessons learned during its tenure, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the annex to resolution 60/286. Furthermore, we believe that now is the time to carry out an assessment of the impact of the decisions adopted by the Assembly concerning the strengthening of the President's Office as part of the effort to reaffirm the Assembly's authority, with a view to learning whether the objectives of those decisions have been achieved.

The Non-Aligned Movement would like to stress the central role played by the General Assembly in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, and we express our support for efforts to strengthen the Assembly's role in that regard. We would like in particular to express our satisfaction at the fact that the Non-Aligned Movement's support for regional rotation and its view that the next Secretary-General should be chosen from among the Asian States Members of the United Nations led to a satisfactory outcome. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his appointment, and we reaffirm our support for him. We would also like to express our appreciation for the work carried out by Mr. Kofi Annan, and we wish him well in his future work.

However, with regard to the selection process of the Secretary-General, we would like to express our disappointment about the fact that paragraph 19 of the annex to resolution 60/286 has not received due consideration during this session, despite the fact that a clear majority believed that informal meetings among the candidates and the various groups represented progress towards a more inclusive and transparent process. The failure to properly implement the provisions of resolution 60/286 leaves the negative impression that the restrictive interpretation of Article 97 of the Charter has prevailed once again in the process of selecting the Secretary-General.

Regarding working methods, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to know about the status of implementation of the requests made of the Secretary-General in paragraphs 24, 29 and 30 of resolution 60/286. Lastly, the Movement requests the presidency of the Assembly to begin a consultation process among Member States with a view to reaching a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly that is open to all Member States, with a view to identifying ways to enhance the role and the authority of the Assembly.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): It is my privilege to speak today on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand in this debate on agenda item 110, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". Our delegations believe that this item should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of the overarching project of United Nations reform. As the Secretary-General-designate, Ban Ki-moon, has commented, the true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most. Our delegations consider that statement to be applicable right across the United Nations agenda, including reform in the area of General Assembly revitalization.

In aiming for deliverables, we do recognize that revitalization — a subject we discuss every year, both here in the Assembly and in the Ad Hoc Working Group — is much more a process than a specific outcome. But equipped with the draft resolution before us, and those we have adopted previously, we will be in a good position to move the process forward.

As an aid to delivery, the delegation of Canada, Australia and New Zealand welcome the request that the Secretary-General submit a status report to the General Assembly during the sixty-first session on the implementation of all resolutions regarding the revitalization of its work. This report may add to the background note already prepared by the Secretariat in response to a request from the Ad Hoc Working Group for information on the state of implementation of previous resolutions on revitalization.

Our delegations were encouraged by the Secretariat's note, which revealed that many past recommendations for revitalization have, in fact, been implemented, while others remain under active consideration. Periodic meetings among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and the holding of topical thematic debates during the Assembly's main session, for example, are both initiatives that are revitalizing this body's fulfilment of its Charter role. Our delegations also welcomed the enhanced transparency and timeliness of the 2006 process for selecting the new Secretary-General, and supported the cooperative efforts of the General Assembly and the Security Council in determining their respective roles in the improved process.

We were disappointed however, that many recommendations have yet to be taken up or implemented consistently. We have many times noted the advantages that might accompany a shorter Assembly agenda, including the opportunity for full discussion of all issues so that decisions might have the greatest possible relevance and impact. Yet the current session of the Assembly has an agenda of over 150 items, seriously limiting the ability of even the largest delegations to commit adequate resources and attention to each issue. For smaller delegations it demands a ruthless prioritization of items and risks marginalizing their engagement throughout the United Nations.

We must make progress on reviewing the mandates of the General Assembly, with a view to eliminating some items and consolidating others, in order to ensure that the membership is fully seized of and able to fully engage in the many important issues before us.

So, too, have we agreed that resolutions should be shorter, simpler, sharper and directed to action, with preambular paragraphs normally kept to a minimum. Yet all too often we settle for merely updating resolutions with technical changes that have no resonance and no impact. Our record on recommending actions to revitalize the General Assembly is strong. What needs work is implementing them.

Like many others, our delegations are committed to improving our engagement in the resolution process and our implementation of previously agreed recommendations. This commitment is ongoing, and we acknowledge that achieving lasting change is in the hands of all Member States.

Our delegations continue to see a need for Member States and the Secretariat to better monitor the follow-up of General Assembly resolutions. This reflects the recognition during the mandate review process that members need improved information and structured processes in order to become better custodians of their resolutions. We are all responsible for this revitalization; we all have an interest in implementing its recommendations.

Revitalizing the General Assembly would have a system-wide impact. As the most representative United Nations body, the Assembly is mandated to discuss all matters within the scope of the United Nations Charter. It makes important decisions on issues ranging from disarmament, human rights and international law to development and specific economic, political and humanitarian situations. It is also responsible for many of the decisions authorizing and implementing United Nations reform. With a streamlined agenda focused on members' core priorities, a practice of adopting concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions, and a balanced working relationship with other parts of the United Nations system, a revitalized General Assembly can better fulfil both its Charter obligations and its members' expectations.

In common with the rest of the United Nations reform process, General Assembly revitalization needs to deliver results to be credible. The draft resolution before us today invites the President of the General Assembly to resume the work of the ad hoc Working Group. Our delegations are willing to fully engage in that group next year, but we hope that it will be more productive in focusing on practical, realistic and deliverable steps to revitalize our Assembly.

Mr. Malhotra (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/61/483), which provides a useful background for our consideration today of the issue of revitalization of the General Assembly. The position of the Non-Aligned Movement on this topic has been expressed by Cuba, and it has my delegation's full support.

The report of the Secretary-General details the many steps implemented over the last few years to streamline the work and agenda of the General Assembly. There has been considerable focus on improving the working methods of the General Assembly and of its Main Committees. Efforts have also been made to rationalize and streamline the agenda of the General Assembly so as to give a sharper focus to its work. Additional staff has been provided to the Office of the President of the General Assembly, as also during the period of transition between an outgoing and incoming President. The Secretariat has endeavoured to reduce the heavy burden of documentation submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. Looking at all this, one might even reach the erroneous conclusion that a great deal had been achieved.

A useful beginning has certainly been made through the revitalization exercise undertaken so far, via implementation of many of the provisions of resolutions already adopted on this subject. However, in a dynamic and changing world, we need regularly to review measures that can improve our work efficiency. At the same time, such measures by themselves do not automatically lead to empowerment of the General Assembly. The streamlining of procedures and working methods is only a means to an end; it is not the end itself.

Having come this far in our quest to revitalize the General Assembly, we must now focus on the more substantive aspects of its revitalization. Such reform must necessarily be an ongoing process that is part of a continuum; it cannot be limited to any current or just-completed process in a particular session of the General Assembly; it has to be part of a larger, ongoing process of United Nations reform that will need to be furthered in the months and years ahead.

A revitalized General Assembly cannot be achieved via better coordination alone. It must focus on setting the global agenda, especially on development issues. Revitalization of the Assembly should ensure that that body addresses the development problems confronting the overwhelming majority of Member States. The General Assembly must also restore the centrality of the United Nations in economic matters. An increase in the weight and a stronger voice on the part of developing countries in the global economic architecture would exercise a positive influence on the Bretton Woods institutions and enhance the acceptability of their decisions.

One substantive area that resolution 60/286 attempted to revitalize is the role of the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General. Efforts to put in place a more inclusive and transparent procedure for the appointment of the Secretary-General, consistent with Article 97 of the Charter, need not be undertaken only when a selection process is on the horizon or under way. There is a need to address this important issue on a continuing basis.

Another topic that has figured in resolutions on General Assembly revitalization, and on which a number of countries have expressed concern during previous discussions, is that of balance between the principal organs of the United Nations. The encroachment by the Security Council on issues that traditionally fall within the Assembly's competence, such as the process of standard-setting and codification of international law and the holding of thematic debates, among others, are of particular concern. The consequent undermining of the role and authority of the General Assembly needs to be redressed if that body is to be revitalized.

The resort to thematic debates in the Security Council on issues that very often fall within the purview of the General Assembly or of the Economic and Social Council remains an area of concern to many delegations. The balance between the principal organs of the United Nations as ordained by the Charter must be respected and maintained. The encroachment by the Security Council on issues that clearly fall within the functions and powers of the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies is also contrary to our collective decision to strengthen and revitalize the General Assembly.

Resolution 60/286 reiterated that, in addition to the Security Council making its annual report more analytical, it should also submit special reports to the General Assembly. The most recent annual report of the Security Council remained deficient in terms of analytical content, while no special report has been submitted. In any case, the Security Council must continue to consider ways to further improve the quality of its reports to the General Assembly.

Operative paragraph 3 (a) of resolution 59/313 requests the President of the General Assembly to propose interactive debates on current issues on the agenda of the Assembly, in consultation with Member States. We appreciate the initiative taken by you, Madam, as President of the General Assembly, in recently organizing such an interactive debate. The views of the Member States in deciding the themes for such periodic thematic discussions are important in order to ensure that the issues taken up are indeed of current global relevance. It would also be useful to avoid duplication of discussions held recently in other forums, for instance, in the Economic and Social Council or in its functional Commissions. Prior consultation on themes for interactive debates can be expected to lead to wider, more effective and enthusiastic participation in them.

In attempting to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, there is also a need to bear in mind the core competence of the General Assembly itself. The General Assembly occupies the central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. However, it is not expected to function as an executive or judicial arm. As its presiding officer, the President must be able to enhance its performance in the interests of the broad membership of the General Assembly. In this era of cross-cutting concerns, we must also guard against an overzealous approach leading to the General Assembly intruding into areas that are essentially the core competence of other bodies in the United Nations system even as we avoid a surrender of its remit to others.

Resolution 60/286, adopted by the General Assembly on this subject at its previous session, invited you, Madam, as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, to convene consultations among Member States to decide on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on this issue that would be open to all Member States. We would urge that such consultations be undertaken without delay so as to enable continued consideration by Member States of the important issue of revitalization of the General Assembly, with a view to identifying ways to enhance its role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Madam, on the way in which you are conducting this debate, which is of particular importance to Member States. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

My delegation expresses its support for the statement on this topic made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and wishes to make the following observations.

First, with regard to strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly, in the September 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), our heads of State and Government reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. The work already done to give effect to that description, particularly within the framework of the Ad Hoc Working Group, is certainly commendable.

My delegation believes that further strengthening of the role and the authority of the General Assembly requires, inter alia, the inclusion on its agenda of issues of crucial importance for the Organization and the international community. It also requires the holding of major thematic debates so that Member States can reach agreement on substantive and timely issues. In that regard, Madam President, we are very pleased at the thematic debate that you convened on 27 November and at your intention to organize two more next year.

We also believe that strengthening the General Assembly requires recognition of its role with regard to international peace and security. Indeed, while it is generally agreed that Article 24 of the Charter confers on the Security Council primary responsibility in this area, that responsibility is not exclusive. Thus, the General Assembly should focus further on issues relating to international peace and security, in accordance with the relevant articles of the Charter.

In another area, the question of the relations between the General Assembly and the other principal United Nations organs should continue to be the subject of in-depth consideration. Such consideration should be carried out here in the plenary and in the context of an approach based on cooperation and maintaining balance, as well as respect for the roles that the Charter confers on each of those organs. The establishment of a de facto legislative competence of the Security Council in areas that, under the Charter's provisions, come within the competence of the General Assembly is a phenomenon that deserves to be discussed.

In the same spirit, while we appreciate the existing cooperation between the presidency of the Economic and Social Council and that of the General Assembly, we believe that further coordination between those two organs would be useful, particularly when it comes to the choice of thematic debates, which must respect the old and new mandates of the Economic and Social Council.

Here, I should like to return to the issue of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. Universal respect for the resolutions adopted by the Assembly would help to strengthen its authority. My delegation supports the call for the identification of factors hindering the implementation of resolutions so that they can be considered in the context of a follow-up mechanism.

Concerning the issue of the General Assembly's relations with civil society, my delegation welcomes the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other non-State actors in strengthening the role of the Assembly. While we support the efforts to further involve NGOs in the Organization's activities, my delegation also believes that that must be in accordance with the existing rules.

Secondly, with regard to improving the General Assembly's working methods, we are pleased that several measures in that area have been implemented, particularly the holding of interactive debates, round tables and question-and-answer sessions within the Main Committees over the past few years. Those practices have made it possible to enhance the deliberations and the decision-making process of the Main Committees.

My delegation supports the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, calling on Member States to, inter alia, elaborate more concise, focused and specific resolutions and decisions, reduce as much as possible the number of preambular paragraphs in resolutions and ensure that Member States associating themselves with a statement already made by the Chair of a group of States focus their statements on points that were not sufficiently developed in that group's statement. My delegation believes, however, that all of that must in no way affect the sovereign right of Member States in that regard.

On another note, we believe that several of the measures proposed in the context of the debates on improving the Assembly's working methods, which have not yet been the subject of decisions, should be reconsidered. That is the case, for example, with the proposal that the work of the General Assembly's Main Committees be organized into two substantive periods per session and that the best working practices of the Main Committees — which, we should recall, differ from one another — be better harmonized.

Here, we should also return to the issue of the voting process within the General Assembly. Once again, we ask the Secretariat to accelerate the completion of the study requested by Member States regarding the use of optical scanners to expedite the counting of votes in secret ballots.

Finally, with regard to the role of the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General, my delegation welcomes the debate held last spring on that issue in the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group. The General Assembly must be able to resume its consideration of that question in due course and in a calm atmosphere.

In conclusion, I wish to express to you, Madam President, my delegation's support for the mandate given to you by resolution 59/313 to hold consultations among Member States aimed at establishing an ad hoc working group, open to all, to study ways to strengthen the role, authority and effectiveness of the General Assembly. In that context, we believe that revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a long-term process that must be continued with determination and seriousness, but without haste.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

Pakistan shares the growing concern of the United Nations general membership that over the past two decades, the role and effectiveness of the General Assembly as envisaged in the Charter have been progressively and significantly eroded.

At recent sessions, the General Assembly adopted resolutions — 57/300, 58/126, 59/313 and 60/286 — which sought to inject vitality into its work and outcomes. The 2000 Summit also reaffirmed the central position of the Assembly. Efforts were continued during the sixtieth session to promote the Summit's decision. Pakistan urges the full implementation of the previous General Assembly resolutions on revitalization.

Pakistan has consistently held that the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly is a political, not a procedural, issue. Certainly, we should further rationalize the Assembly's agenda, amalgamating similar items and eliminating redundant issues. We should seek to streamline resolutions, making them shorter and more action-oriented. We should be better organized in plenary meetings of the Assembly and its Main Committees so as to save money and time, conduct more focused discussions and adopt more specific decisions.

The reports sought from the Secretariat could also be improved and, in certain instances, consolidated and streamlined. Repetitive and overlapping mandates could be avoided. Indeed, considerable improvements have been made already and further improvements can be made, including through the review of mandates initiated during this year in the General Assembly's informal consultations of the plenary.

Yet the real revitalization of the Assembly will happen only once the general membership displays the political will and determination to enable the Assembly to discharge its prescribed role and responsibility as envisaged in the Charter, and only once the erosion of that role and authority — principally by the Security Council and, to a certain extent, by the Secretariat — is halted and reversed. Under the Charter, the General Assembly's role is broad and far-reaching. It is the principal deliberative and policymaking — and the most representative — organ of the United Nations. It is the principal forum where the policies of States are to be harmonized and the purposes and principles of the Charter promoted and realized.

The General Assembly's role covers political, security, economic, social, human rights and humanitarian issues, norm-setting and treaty-making, as well as the financial and administrative management of the Organization and its Secretariat. The Assembly's political role is manifested in the ability of any Member State to raise any issue of concern to it in the Assembly under an existing or additional agenda item. This is the special value of the United Nations for the majority of the membership. That ability should not be arbitrarily restricted or proscribed in the name of rationalization.

It is particularly vital to ensure the exercise of the Assembly's role in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 35 of the Charter. The encroachment on the role of the Assembly by the Security Council should be reversed. The Council's role in the maintenance of peace and security, as envisaged in the Charter, is mainly reactive, not proactive. We believe that the thematic issues raised in the Security Council should revert to the General Assembly.

The Security Council has assumed a role in two areas: terrorism and non-proliferation. This was in response to extraordinary events. Now that the General Assembly has adopted a comprehensive strategy on terrorism, the main responsibility in this area should revert to the Assembly. The Security Council's committees should be replaced by a standing committee on counter-terrorism under the General Assembly. Similarly, the Assembly should reassert its role in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, replacing the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004) with a comparable Assembly committee. Likewise, the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, rather than the Security Council, should be the focus of consideration of humanitarian issues, including those arising from conflict situations.

The Assembly should also exercise closer examination of the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council. We support the submission of special reports by the Security Council. Such a review is especially necessary whenever the Security Council authorizes action under Charter VII and whenever a veto is exercised in the Council. The Assembly also has a vital role in the economic and social fields, both in policy formulation and implementation. The Economic and Social Council — which is to hold annual ministerial reviews and to act as a development cooperation forum — should report to the Assembly. The Assembly should organize a special meeting on development during its annual general debate to allow for a ministerial and leadership review of economic and social policy issues.

We attach special importance to the norm-setting and treaty-making role of the General Assembly. To this end, we would advocate the creation of ad hoc committees to elaborate instruments on various issues identified for new norm-setting by the Assembly or as a result of recommendations of various committees and commissions, such as the Law Commission.

The General Assembly's role in the financial and administrative management of the Organization needs to be strengthened. We will resist all efforts to weaken or marginalize that role, which is currently exercised mainly through the Fifth Committee. In particular, the Assembly should closely scrutinize the decisions of the Security Council which require the allocation of resources for peacekeeping or other purposes.

The Assembly's administrative role should be strengthened by, inter alia, requiring the Secretary-General to consult the Assembly on all high-level appointments, including the appointment of special representatives of the Secretary-General. The Assembly's approval should also be secured for the establishment of high-level panels on various issues and for the selection of their members.

A major reason for the erosion of the Assembly's credibility and effectiveness is the non-implementation of its resolutions and decisions. Implementation can be enhanced by improving the content of the Assembly's resolutions. But there is a pressing need for some form of mechanism capable of monitoring the implementation of such resolutions. We therefore suggest that, for every resolution, the Secretariat be required to submit, within a specific time frame, a report on the status of implementation. This should include information on the reasons for non-implementation or delay in implementation. A special unit could be created within the Secretariat for the follow-up and review of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. Perhaps such a unit could be located within the Office of the General Assembly President.

Finally, we support all efforts to strengthen the Office of the President of the Assembly. Additional professional and support staff should be provided for the Office. The Office should also be strengthened operationally. The Secretary-General should brief the Assembly President, perhaps every two weeks, on the activities under way in various parts of the United Nations, including in the Security Council. The President should also be authorized to request special briefings on any situation or issue from the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and from the Secretary-General. In turn, the President of the General Assembly should evolve a standing mechanism — perhaps through the General Committee — to keep the general membership of the United Nations fully abreast of developments in various parts of the Organization and its family of organizations.

Pakistan hopes that during this session we will revive the consultative mechanism to consider recommendations for the revival of the General Assembly. Pakistan will work together with other Member States, especially the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, to restore the role envisaged by the Charter for the Assembly.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to express our support for the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

Today, the General Assembly is debating one of the most important items on its agenda. Its importance is derived from the character of the General Assembly's Charter role and authority as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. In addition, since the General Assembly comprises all Member States, it is the pulsing heart of the United Nations. It is responsible for overseeing the delegation of authority and responsibility among the main and subsidiary organs and for supervising the implementation of their mandates. It has even been called upon to carry out such duties in their place, when necessary, or when any of those bodies exceed their authority and actually encroach on the mother-body of the General Assembly, or gravely violate the principles and purposes of the United Nations by not meeting their responsibilities in an effective and timely manner.

Those considerations were behind the importance that heads of State or Government attached in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) to adhering to the purposes and principles of the Charter in the process of United Nations reform. World leaders reaffirmed the importance of the Organization's credibility and of increasing its ability to shoulder its responsibilities. These are increasingly linked to ensuring the Assembly's ability to exercise its institutional authority, even though past resolutions already reflect international approval of a number of important steps in that direction.

However, such resolutions represent only a small proportion of the many crucial reforms that are needed to enhance the capacity of the General Assembly. Some needed reforms are increasingly controversial due to the desire of some main and subsidiary organs of the United Nations system to encroach upon the authority of the General Assembly, in flagrant violation of the principles and purposes on the basis of which the Organization was founded.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and I would like to stress a number of important points. First, the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly is an ongoing process based on ensuring the effective implementation of the relevant Assembly resolutions and negotiating additional steps both to ensure the implementation of what has been agreed on and to build on that with the aim of restoring the viability of the General Assembly.

Those endeavours will not be successful if we limit our action to rationalizing the agenda and mandates of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, or to attempts to reduce the number of meetings or minimize the volume of reports submitted to the Assembly.

We need a clear and objective plan based on an integrated strategy aimed at enhancing the Assembly's ability to exercise its authority despite attempts by other main and subsidiary organs to prevent that. In that perspective, Madam President, we support your approach of undertaking general discussions on important issues such as gender equality, dialogue among civilizations, development issues and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Secondly, although the process of appointing the eighth Secretary-General of the Organization was successful, with the General Assembly appointing him by consensus following a recommendation by the Security Council, the associated deliberations revealed the need to continue the search for ways and means to increase the role of the General Assembly in the process, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. These could include implementing General Assembly resolutions 51/241 and 60/286, the establishment of a clear mechanism enabling the Assembly to evaluate candidates and submit their names to the Security Council for consideration, and tightened review of the criteria the Council uses in submitting its recommendations to the General Assembly.

In addition, it is necessary to consider restricting the use of the veto in the Council's selection process, to ensure fairness and equality among Council members without undermining the Council's Charter role in recommending candidates and the General Assembly's in appointing one of them.

Thirdly, the Security Council's increasingly frequent attempts to encroach on the authority of the General Assembly should come to an end. There should be full respect for the distinctions made in the Charter regarding the responsibilities and the functions of the principal organs of the United Nations, and, in particular, respect for the General Assembly's prerogative to supervise how the Security Council is meeting its main responsibilities. To that end, the imbalance in institutional relations between these bodies must be repaired, as we discussed in detail on 11 December during the joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111, on the report of the Security Council and on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, respectively (see A/61/PV.72).

Fourthly, we cannot overemphasize the importance of promoting the General Assembly's ability to address instances where the Security Council has failed to fulfil its responsibility, placed upon it by Member States, to maintain international peace and security. Such failures may occur as a result of the abuse of the veto power, or because the Council is unable to comprehend the nature and implications of important cases that threaten international stability. These failures negatively impact the Council's ability to settle conflicts, thereby increasing their duration and the suffering of the peoples involved.

To express their concern over this critical situation, heads of State or Government of the Non-aligned Movement called upon their permanent representatives to the United Nations, in an official statement published following the Havana summit, to submit a draft resolution that would restore the General Assembly's authority to take necessary action to address dangerous cases affecting international peace and security, in particular those which the Security Council has failed to address because of the abuse of the veto power. These would include cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as ensuring ceasefires between warring parties. As mentioned by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, this draft resolution will soon be submitted to the Assembly, along with another related to the Havana Summit.

Fifthly, in the same context, it is imperative that we pursue the simultaneous revitalization of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and that we ensure that no one used financial obstacles to prevent the Assembly from fulfilling its mandates. In conformity with the principle of "one country one vote", assessed financial contributions based on the ability to pay should not be used as a tool to put pressure on the Secretariat or to undermine mandates. It is worth mentioning, in this context, that balance and confidence between developing and developed States, as well as with the Secretariat, must be restored on a more just footing. Such an approach is imperative if the General Assembly is to meet its obligations without being subject to undue pressure. It is also necessary to enhance the role of the President of the General Assembly, who must supervise a balanced relationship among the principal organs of the United Nations.

In order to achieve the aspirations of the general membership to revitalize the role of the General Assembly, the delegation of Egypt supports the establishment of an open-ended working group to study the proposals of Member States which set forth frameworks derived from previous resolutions on this issue. Such a working group would identify new perspectives on serious and bold proposals on how to promote the authority of the General Assembly to enable it and its presidency to satisfy the ambitions of the general membership.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/61/483) presenting an overview of the status of implementation of the resolutions regarding the revitalization of our work in the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

The European Union believes that the role and authority of the General Assembly has benefited from the revitalization efforts carried out under the leadership of a number of General Assembly Presidents over the past 15 years. Most recently, last September, the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly completed its work, after six months and several rounds of negotiations. The Assembly then adopted resolution 60/286, containing further decisions aimed to improve the Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to thank the co-Chairpersons of the Working Group, Ambassador Abdullah Alsaidi of Yemen and Ambassador Solveiga Silkalna of Latvia, for their valuable work.

Any reform requires all parties to agree upon, and then to implement, realistic and action-oriented steps to be taken at the practical level. The European Union welcomes the achievements that have been set out to improve the working methods of the General Assembly.

Most of the decisions and recommendations already taken cannot be implemented by the General Assembly as such, or by the Secretariat. The real challenge in implementing these decisions belongs to the Member States. We — every single delegation in this Hall — have to act accordingly and apply in our own performance in the General Assembly what has been found useful and necessary to revitalize this body. For that reason, the EU would like to highlight some of the decisions adopted by Member States.

First, revitalization of the General Assembly is an ongoing process, not just one event or a series of meetings. Therefore, we would like to encourage the Main Committees to review their agendas and working methods on a continuous basis. In particular, the General Assembly and its Main Committees should continue to rationalize and streamline their agendas, including through clustering and the biennialization or triennalization of agenda items, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The EU welcomes the fact that, as noted in the Secretary General's report, the General Assembly is continuing to make efforts to streamline the agenda of the plenary. In addition, further innovative means should be considered to make our debates more in-depth, focused and interactive in order to make the Organization better serve the international community.

The EU notes with concern that, according to the Secretary-General's report, there has been only limited success in consolidating reports on related subjects. The question of rationalization of reports and their issuance is one area where more progress should be made both to avoid duplication and to allow the work of Member States to be more meaningful.

The EU would like to stress the need to make reports available in all official languages in a timely manner and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as agreed in resolution 48/264. This is necessary for all delegations to be able to consider the substance of reports in advance.

Secondly, we have emphasized that the United Nations should be dedicated to preserving its institutional memory. Exchange of experiences between the outgoing and incoming Assembly Presidents and Bureau members of the Main Committees needs to become a regular practice in order to improve our ability to work for a common goal. The EU looks forward to receiving a study of precedents and past practices of the General Assembly being undertaken by the Office of Legal Affairs when it becomes available.

Thirdly, many aspects of modern technology may be useful to facilitate our intergovernmental work. New websites assist delegations in being better informed and also help us to be more open and visible to the world outside. Greater public visibility through the mass media could make the United Nations more understandable to the world constituency.

Information technology may also be useful in improving monitoring of the implementation of those General Assembly resolutions that are relevant for the advancement of international development goals. The EU also looks forward to the upcoming study on the use of optical scanners which will be presented to the General Assembly later in this session. Optical scanners could be an essential tool for delegations during our very frequent elections.

Coordination and cooperation should guide our work. In that regard, we welcome the regular meetings of the General Assembly President with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In this regard, the EU would like to acknowledge the increased level of transparency in the recent process of selecting the new Secretary-General.

While reaffirming the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, the EU would like to reiterate the decision taken in the context of the revitalization process to invite the Security Council to submit to the General Assembly special subject-oriented reports on issues of current concern, as enshrined in Article 24 of the Charter.

In conclusion, the process of General Assembly revitalization should not be perceived as a separate task. Rather, it should be framed in the broader context of the ongoing United Nations reforms, where issues are interconnected. Furthermore, the EU would like to emphasize that the full involvement of the General Assembly in the process of reforming the Organization is concrete proof of its own revitalization.

The EU is ready to engage in further discussions on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. Mohamed (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Republic of Yemen and to express my appreciation and thanks for the outstanding way in which you are conducting our important work.

I must also congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483) and its annex relating to the implementation of resolutions on that subject. We wish him every happiness and success in his future life and activities.

We pay tribute to the co-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly for the remarkable efforts they have made and for the smooth functioning of the Group during what was sometimes a difficult period. We also support the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

During past sessions, the Republic of Yemen has followed with great interest the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Reform also continues to be considered in relation to other items on the Assembly's agenda this session. That requires that we engage in further debate and exchange of ideas and that we take decisions not with haste, but with care.

Today, we are considering this issue in view of the General Assembly's central role as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations, which represents all Member States on an equal footing and where political decisions are formulated and debate is carried out in a democratic and transparent manner. That role was strengthened by the holding of the 2005 World Summit and by the Assembly's success during the sixtieth session in implementing resolutions on reform by establishing the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and adopting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The General Assembly must be revitalized in order to consolidate and strengthen its role, authority and mandate under the Charter and thus prevent the Security Council from encroaching on its areas of competence. We believe that the Council is gradually appropriating the competences of the Assembly. That has caused incoherence, disharmony and constant tension between the Assembly and the Council. Thus, the Assembly has sometimes found itself paralysed, unable to carry out its Charter mandates and responsibilities. That is why we urge the Assembly to place the highest priority on revitalizing its work within the framework of comprehensive reform so that such reform can be fully successful. The Assembly will be streamlined and revitalized if we eliminate duplication and repetitive debates in various United Nations organs and if we rationalize its debates and focus our attention on issues of concrete interest to all States, particularly sustainable development.

We are especially concerned by the fact that the work of the Security Council is frequently hindered by the excessive use of the veto, which prevents the Council from carrying out the tasks entrusted to it with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. Therefore, we believe that the General Assembly should play a fundamental role in the maintenance of international peace and security when the Council is unable to do so, particularly since all States without exception are represented in the Assembly with no privileges reserved for a few States.

We welcome the holding of periodic meetings among the Presidents of the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. That is likely to strengthen cooperation among the three organs and to contribute to the full coordination of their work, thus increasing the effectiveness and strengthening the role and the credibility of the Organization as a whole. It is essential that the principal organs cooperate so that their respective mandates supplement one another.

Yemen is aware of the major role played by the General Assembly in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. We support the efforts to consolidate the Assembly's role in that regard. We urge that the process of selecting the Secretary-General be made more transparent and inclusive, through the participation of all Members, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. Strengthening the Office of the President of the Assembly necessarily requires strengthening the Assembly's authority. The presidency cannot carry out its balancing role of providing good offices and mediation unless it is equipped with the efficient logistical and human resources it needs.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): At the outset, I want to thank the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

During the past few months, we experienced the excitement of adopting several new reforms and resolutions. However, despite our initial enthusiasm, it seems clear to me that in this Hall and around this building, it is business as usual. Our young and very capable colleagues, who come here from all over the world with the enthusiasm, dreams and ambitions of those who want to change the course of the world's events, often find themselves bogged down in endless meetings focusing not on the substance of the issues but on the legalistic meaning of a few words. It seems as if most of the excitement occurs while they are watching the scoreboard results of a contested draft resolution.

I believe that the first and most important reform needed by the General Assembly is a new and more effective way of doing business among ourselves, among our missions, among our valued associates and between the Member States and the Secretariat. Every time we gather in the General Assembly, we have to make sure that we engage in a frank, open and businesslike exchange so that all of us will be able to make decisions on so many pressing issues on the basis of the collective wisdom in this Hall and to provide ourselves with appropriate implementing instruments.

In this Hall, which is full of capable professionals at the peak of their diplomatic careers, policymaking must be our first priority. Moreover, we need to do much more strategic planning before delegating our powers to the many agencies and bodies of the United Nations. We cannot relinquish the central role of this organ.

The word "revitalization" comes from the Latin and means "to give new life". That is what we need to do in the General Assembly. We need to restore our enthusiasm for the Assembly as well as its credibility, for the benefit of our countries and our future generations.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the General Assembly (A/61/483) as the principal organ for discussing international problems. We wish to express our views in order to contribute to the debate on this important issue.

Honduras believes that revitalization of the General Assembly should be aimed at reaffirming its central role as the chief deliberative organ for the adoption of universal actions and policies for the good of humanity.

A famous Latin American statesman once said, referring to another international organization, that that organization was nothing more than a reflection of what countries wanted it to be. Indeed, that is a basic principle that we should use as a starting point for any analysis related to our actions to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. It is our actions, our governmental policies, our guiding principles and our daily activities that will form the profile of the Organization that we have or wish to have.

Accordingly, it is important that, in addition to being involved in policymaking, we assume political responsibility for our decisions and define clearly our objectives. We welcomed the progress made and the positive results achieved during the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly. However, major problems remain, and we will have to show greater resolve in addressing them. Thus at every stage we will have to endeavour to make optimum use of the resources available, so as to produce a United Nations that is equipped to confront the ever-greater challenges facing humanity.

We view mandate review as a very important goal. In particular, the rationalization and combining of items, as well as the adoption of coherent policies, would allow for united and comprehensive responses that would surely benefit both our Organization and our peoples, who so often look to us to help them realize their hopes and dreams and resolve their pressing problems.

Mandate review also could rationalize the resources that are currently dispersed throughout the Organization. We therefore deem it necessary to set priorities and to fine-tune our working agendas, in addition to restructuring and reorganizing the Main Committees and enhancing their working methods.

We believe that the process of revitalizing the General Assembly should also aim to restore the rightful balance of power and division of labour between the General Assembly and the Security Council. It might be useful to propose the establishment of a coordination mechanism among the two bodies, so as to enable proper communication in a broad spirit of interdependence and mutual cooperation. Such coordination should also include the Economic and Social Council.

The report of the Secretary-General deals appropriately with the question of the programmes of the work of the Main Committees and suggests their rationalization, as that would make a substantial contribution to alleviating the workload of the General Assembly.

It is appropriate here to recall that the Secretary-General, in his report to the General Assembly, indicates that the Millennium Declaration and the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit reaffirmed the central role of the Assembly in its capacity as the principal deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Madam President, we listened very carefully to the proposal you made this afternoon to hold meetings on issues related to gender and to dialogue among civilizations, and concerning the need to continue strengthening contacts with outside partners, including national and regional parliaments, civil society and the private sector. Honduras warmly welcomes those ideas. We also enthusiastically supported the proposal made by the Non-Aligned Movement to retain this item on our agenda.

We are certain that by strengthening the United Nations we will be able to realize the purposes and principles of the Charter, of which Honduras was a founding signatory. Our country will continue to participate in all discussions and negotiations aimed at strengthening our Organization.

Honduras, our country, hopes to see an Organization that is strong, united and deeply committed to today's world — one that hears the cries of humanity and can look forward to a day that is lit up by the smiles of the millions of human beings who long for a world of solidarity, peace, justice and, above all, equality.

Mr. Limeres (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we are once again considering the important subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly, and we have before us the report prepared by the Secretary-General. Argentina appreciates the information submitted to us, which will no doubt contribute to the careful evaluation of the outcome of the implementation of the mandates established in previous resolutions, including 58/126, 58/316, 59/313 and 60/286.

We wish to reiterate Argentina's priority commitment to the strengthening of the role of the General Assembly as the chief universal, deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, in particular through the reaffirmation of, and respect for, its competencies, as set out in the Charter.

We deem it essential to maintain and respect the mandates of each body as conferred by the Charter and the relevant resolutions, as well as to promote transparency. In that regard, we welcome initiatives that strengthen the channels of communication between the Security Council and the General Assembly, including the practice of holding regular meetings among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Likewise, we wish to stress the significant degree of transparency that we were able to achieve throughout the process of the selection process of the new Secretary-General, who will take his oath of office tomorrow — a process, which Argentina had the privilege of participating in and promoting. However, we agree that there is a need for greater efforts and a more coherent methodology on the part of the Security Council in order to move forward along this path.

Encouraging progress has been made concerning the working methods of the General Assembly, including its Main Committees. However, we must not forget that the objective of greater efficiency in the work of the Assembly will not be achieved through a purely methodological, formal approach. This is not about rationalizing the agenda or trying to achieve numerical efficiency; rather, it is about securing the political will required to implement all the mandates agreed upon by Member States through General Assembly resolutions, and ensuring that the Secretariat and the implementing agencies have sufficient resources at their disposal for that purpose. We must continue our efforts so as to finalize our work in those areas, in which there has been only partial implementation thus far.

Resolution 60/286 calls for consultations to decide on the re-establishment of an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, open to all Member States. Argentina supports the continued work of this mechanism in order to analyse the status of implementation of measures already adopted and to evaluate their effectiveness to enhance the functioning, authority and efficiency of the General Assembly, which is essential in order to continue to make solid progress towards that objective.

Madam President, you may count on the full support and cooperation of the Argentine delegation in your efforts to implement the plans that you have mentioned in this connection.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): As recalled in the report of the Secretary-General before us (A/61/483), the revitalization of the General Assembly has been examined by the Assembly at length and in depth in the course of the last 15 years. In addition to all the resolutions adopted to date, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1) included the revitalization of the General Assembly in the framework of United Nations reform and called for the full and speedy implementation of measures to strengthen the role and authority of the Assembly. I wish to draw attention to some issues contained in resolution 60/286 and in the report of the Secretary-General which may provide the General Assembly with guidance for the work ahead.

The conceptual basis of the revitalization process is now consolidated. Brazil considers the present phase to be mainly one of implementation, the rhythm of which is influenced not only by the political motivations of Member States, but also by the pace of wider United Nations reform, which encompasses its institutions and practices, as well as by developing countries' determination to achieve more significant participation in the decision-making mechanisms.

The relationship among the principal organs of the United Nations is usually seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing. As a consequence, the interaction of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should amount to a mechanism of checks and balances. For the optimal functioning of that system, the main organs must perform their respective functions and exercise their powers in the manner provided for by the Charter. However, the system is not working as it should since none of the main organs works properly. The Security Council extrapolates its competences; the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council usually fall short of their mandates.

This interaction would be less confrontational and more fruitful if the Security Council were more transparent, inclusive, representative and accountable. A significant part of the legitimate complaints regarding the so-called encroachment by the Council upon the work of the General Assembly would be preventable should the Security Council be reformed in line with those objectives.

As has been evident in the debate on Security Council reform over the last two days, without a meaningful reform of the Council that encompasses enlargement in both categories of membership and a profound revision of the Council's methods of work, any sort of mechanism to bridge the existing structural gaps between the main organs would merely be a halfway measure. We also expect that a strengthened Economic and Social Council should, as a part of the system, be able to fully play its Charter-based role.

At the same time, the General Assembly itself has a fundamental role in its own revitalization. It must make use to the full of the functions and powers provided to it by the Charter. The active role of the President of the General Assembly is essential in this regard, particularly in the promotion of debate on the outstanding issues and in strengthening the interaction of the principal organs.

The selection of the Secretary-General has recently received a great deal of attention, and properly so. The extensive discussions that preceded the adoption of resolution 60/286 brought to the fore the question of the role of the General Assembly in that regard. The interaction of candidates with groups of Member States can be considered unprecedented. As compared to previous processes, the Security Council was more transparent in the selection of the successor to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Nevertheless, a truly transparent and inclusive process goes far beyond a few measures, such as the issuing of letters of a generic nature by the President of the Council to the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The General Assembly should not lose the momentum created by this exercise, which should be considered an initial step towards building a truly transparent and inclusive process for the future.

The delegation of Brazil views the revitalization of the General Assembly as a work in progress. We willingly acknowledge the positive developments that have been achieved so far. Nevertheless, concrete results are still insufficient. For this reason, and taking into account the need to seize the political momentum injected into the situation by the Outcome Document, my delegation favours the continuation of the ad hoc working group, whose work should be focused on the monitoring of the implementation of the current framework and on providing proposals on how to move the process forward. A decision on the convening of the group should be taken without delay, in order to allow sufficient time for an adequate and in-depth consideration of the most important issues during the sixty-first session.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus welcomes the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483). The report contains much valuable information that helps us to evaluate impartially the results of our many years of work on strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the United Nations system. This report was even more needed in July and August at the final stage of negotiations on the text adopted as resolution 60/286.

In its statement, with which our delegation aligns itself, the Non-Aligned Movement made a point of mentioning the importance of timely and full implementation of resolutions of the General Assembly. If we are in fact firmly resolved to make the Assembly a more authoritative and influential organ heeded by the entire world, we need to make serious progress on the implementation of the decisions we adopt.

We believe that resolution 60/286, adopted in September, makes a significant contribution to the reform of the General Assembly and to enhancing its potential in terms of its influence on processes both within the United Nations and outside it. Specifically, the resolution provides for a mechanism to increase the Assembly's participation in the process of appointing the Secretary-General. We regret that this mechanism was not fully utilized in 2006. Paragraph 20 of resolution 60/286 was not implemented. That paragraph provides for the formal presentation of the candidates in a manner that allows sufficient time for interaction with Member States. Furthermore, the request for candidates to present their views to all Member States was not fully complied with.

Thorough preparatory work by Member States should be the basis of every Assembly resolution. On what work on the part of the General Assembly was which resolution 61/3, concerning the appointment of the Secretary-General, based? In our opinion, the work was carried out by the Security Council. We believe that it is important to take those shortcomings into account and to prevent the situation from recurring when the next Secretary-General is appointed.

In an age of globalization and the unprecedented interdependence of the processes of maintaining international peace and security, promoting development and protecting human rights, the issue of sharing responsibilities among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is, inevitably, of great relevance.

Our delegation believes that there is no justification for the Security Council to consider issues that are within the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In our opinion, the Security Council should pay more attention to the settlement of existing and emerging armed conflicts and should refrain from considering situations that do not represent a threat to peace and security. The use of the Security Council by individual members for propaganda purposes can also undermine its authority. We also believe that the elaboration of normative documents is a task for the General Assembly, which should take into account Security Council practice in this regard.

There are, however, some grounds for optimism. We welcome the new layout of the front page of the daily *Journal of the United Nations* in accordance with paragraph 15 of resolution 60/286. Information about plenary meetings and other major General Assembly events now appears alongside information about Security Council meetings. Unfortunately, it took too long for us to take that logical decision, which has enabled us to enhance the visibility of the General Assembly without budgetary implications. Our satisfaction would be greater still if the meetings of the principal organs were listed in a completely rational manner — specifically, in alphabetical order. We hope that it will not take another year and require a separate resolution on the use of alphabetical order in United Nations practice before that happens.

We believe that the potential of the General Assembly's activities would be enhanced if they had greater thematic focus. We recall the positive role played by the one-week hearings that took place in the General Assembly on terrorism in October 2001 in the formation of the global counter-terrorist coalition and how the special meeting of the General Assembly in January 2005 helped to mobilize international support for the countries of South-East Asia affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami. The high-level dialogues on migration and on financing for development gave additional impetus to the development of international cooperation on those issues. That is only to be expected, as the Assembly provides a unique opportunity for specialists and experts to gather in New York and identify the most promising and forward-looking international practices and the most critical problems hampering international cooperation in specific fields. We support this trend in the work of the General Assembly and call for its further development.

One more issue deserves attention. Our delegation does not deny the importance of ensuring that the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly are concise. However, the limitations imposed on the length of reports often have a negative impact on the quality of the consideration of the issues. We have particular concerns regarding the preparation under such conditions of reports on global issues. It is no secret that every State and every group of States wishes to obtain information from a report about those aspects of a problem that most affect it, and we need to address that problem.

Together with our partners in the Non-Aligned Movement and all other interested delegations, we will continue to work on proposals and initiatives that can strengthen the role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483). My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Latvia and of Yemen for their work as Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on this issue.

For Colombia, a founding Member of the United Nations, strengthening the General Assembly is a matter of fundamental importance. As the principal organ which has universal participation and transparent decision-making mechanisms, the General Assembly is the forum in which priority issues on the global agenda, including economic and social and development and peace and security, can be dealt with properly and effectively.

The process of revitalizing the General Assembly must not be just an exercise in efficiency and the reduction of the number of agenda items, but must have as its main purpose the strengthening of this body as a forum for decision-making on substantive issues. Revitalizing the General Assembly is the best way to make progress towards the objective of strengthening the United Nations as the main institution of the multilateral system.

What do we have after 15 years of working to revitalize the Assembly? For many of us, the results are not very clear. Nevertheless, after examining the report and considering the efforts made by the most recent Co-Chairs, we can conclude that progress has been achieved, even if it has been slow. Such progress is reflected, for example, in the biennialization and triennialization of agenda items. On some issues there has been a reduction in the number of resolutions and a consolidation of reports. We have also observed that the Main Committees have done a better job of preparing their programmes of work. There is better dialogue between the President of the Assembly and Member States. Progress is being made in the area of thematic debates in plenary. And consultations took place — albeit speedily — between some of the candidates for the post of Secretary-General and regional groups.

Unfortunately, there is also some frustration with the process. The implementation of General Assembly resolutions has fallen short of initial expectations. The Security Council's reports to the General Assembly suffer from ambiguity and lack analysis and depth. The records of Assembly meetings take months to be published, while those of the Council are published the day after each meeting. In addition, we would like to know the outcome of the initiative to use optical scanners to facilitate the counting of secret votes in election processes. With that system, we could save valuable time in the work of the Assembly.

It is important to recognize that we continue to have a packed and sometimes overloaded agenda. It exceeds the capacity of small missions and makes it difficult for us to act more effectively. The proliferation of agenda items must be evaluated with an open mind and with sensitivity regarding issues of particular interest to Member States. This is not an easy task, but it is necessary to make substantive progress in order to enhance the Assembly's efficiency. In that connection, the outcome of the thematic debates in the Assembly could be of particular importance. The format and procedures of such debates must give priority to timely issues that will enrich the decision-making process and the results achieved by the Organization.

The Secretary-General's report and the consultations carried out during the previous session of the Assembly show the need for informal contacts between Member States and representatives of bodies and Committees that have not yet been able to implement the provisions of the resolutions on revitalizing the General Assembly. Such contacts would make it possible to identify recommendations and solutions aimed at making more effective progress in such implementation.

Yesterday, an extensive debate on Security Council reform concluded. The relationship between reform of the Council and revitalization of the Assembly became clear. A proper review of working methods must lead to strengthening the work of the General Assembly as the principal United Nations organ. The implementation of other reform initiatives — such as the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the review of mandates and management reform of the Secretariat — must be in conformity with the ultimate goal of revitalizing the General Assembly. Likewise, my delegation believes that future discussions on system-wide coherence must be guided by the objective of strengthening the Assembly for the benefit of Member States. The system will be coherent only to the extent that the Assembly's role is strengthened.

I wish to reaffirm my delegation's commitment to revitalization of the General Assembly, which is the most democratic and most representative body in the system of international relations. If the United Nations is to be able to face its current challenges effectively, the General Assembly must be able to fully exercise its role and its authority in the areas of its responsibility, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. That has been among Colombia's positions since 1945. The Assembly is the only organ capable of fulfilling the hopes of millions of people who long for a better, more stable and equitable world.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We believe that, overall, this has been a better year for the General Assembly than some of the previous ones. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and of the Human Rights Council, in particular, were significant achievements, and so was the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Assembly thus illustrated its ability to be a policymaking body that is indeed at the heart of the Organization. It also became clear that we might be well advised to rethink the concept of consensus, which is almost religiously observed in our discussions, sometimes to the detriment of the quality of our decisions. Consensus is not necessarily the same things as unanimity, but rather numerically very strong support that reflects genuine political commitment. What we have known all along has also been confirmed: strong leadership is essential if the General Assembly is to achieve significant results.

While we can be proud of some of our achievements over the past year, we must, at the same time, address the deteriorating relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council. That relationship appears to be ever more troubled and has had a negative impact on numerous discussions, including those on management reform. We are concerned that many view the relationship as antagonistic instead of complementary. We believe that a strong Assembly and a strong Council can coexist and can work to each other's benefit, and that both bodies must have a genuine interest in having a functional and effective counterpart.

Much has been said about the blurred lines of competence between the two organs and about the migration of topics from the Assembly to the Council. We share those concerns, but we do not believe that blaming the Council is the solution to this unwelcome trend. Quite to the contrary, we believe that the Assembly has to assert its authority in the areas where it has competence under the Charter, not only by insisting on its competence, but also by producing clear results that justify the competence attributed to it.

As a member of the group known as the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — we naturally see the working methods of the Security Council as a case in point regarding the relationship between the two organs. It is quite clear that the Assembly has the mandate, both legally and politically, to make recommendations on the way in which the Council conducts its business. Such recommendations were contained in the draft resolution (A/60/L.49) that the S-5 submitted in March 2006. More than anything else, that text was aimed at creating a dialogue between the two organs on a topic that is of obvious interest and relevance to the membership as a whole.

In hindsight, we believe that we have partly succeeded, in that our text had a clear impact on the discussions in the Council itself. At the same time, the dialogue was not quite what we had in mind, because most of it consisted of things that were left unspoken. We hope that it will be possible to further develop this dialogue and to make it mutually beneficial and constructive. We will follow with great attention the implementation of the measures decided on by the Council itself, suggest further measures for consideration and seek formal and informal ways to engage the Council on this subject. Given the continued inaction on the issue of enlargement of the Council, steady progress and an ongoing process on the issue of working methods — which is of particular importance to small countries — are all the more important.

We have mixed feelings concerning the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. On the one hand, we strongly believe that an Assembly that is fully capable of fulfilling the tasks assigned to it by the Charter is essential for a sound institutional balance within the Organization. On the other hand, we do not get the impression that talking about revitalization brings us much closer to that goal.

Indeed, the report before us today (A/61/483) makes for somewhat ironic reading. In paragraph 9, reference is made to the annual report of the Security Council and the decision of the Assembly that the report should be considered "through substantive and interactive debates". We just finished our debate on the report yesterday evening. A substantive discussion was impossible, of course, given the date of the report's submission. There was nothing interactive about the debate either. We would welcome such an interactive debate, even if it were convened at a later stage during the session.

Paragraph 14 of the report addresses the selection of the Secretary-General. We wholeheartedly welcome His Excellency Ban Ki-moon as the new Secretary-General and look forward to his being sworn in tomorrow in this Hall. Nevertheless, the process leading to his selection had little to do with the measures set out in paragraph 14 of the report before the Assembly.

Rather sadly, the discussions on revitalization confirm some of the prejudices of the wider public against the United Nations. A good part of the report is dedicated to the problem of non-implementation, which is, indeed, an urgent problem. But it becomes clear that non-implementation starts with the very decisions on revitalization itself. Instead of engaging in these repetitive and at times absurdly circular discussions, we would be better advised to seize the General Assembly of issues of real relevance and to ensure that decisions are taken that have a real impact on the problems that they purport to address.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 110.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

United Nations

A/61/PV.78

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

78th plenary meeting

Thursday, 14 December 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa .... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 104 (*continued*)

Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Draft resolution (A/61/L.48/Rev.1)

The President: The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/61/L.48/Rev.1, entitled "Tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations".

We shall first proceed to take action on draft resolution A/61/L.48/Rev.1. Thereafter, we shall complete the appointment process of the next Secretary-General with the administration of the oath of office.

I give the floor to the representative of the Niger to introduce, on behalf of the African Group, draft resolution A/61/L.48/Rev.1. The draft resolution also enjoys the support of the other four regional groups.

Mr. Abani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the States members of the African Group, I have the great honour to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.48/Rev.1, entitled "Tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations".

My delegation would like to express its profound gratitude to all the other States and groups of States that have sponsored the draft resolution. Such sponsorship is a tradition — and it is also logical. The draft takes tradition into account, since the Assembly generally honours the outgoing Secretary-General under similar circumstances. But it is also logical because it reflects the reality, that of an outgoing Secretary-General who has displayed such great professional and personal qualities and who has contributed, through many initiatives that have been welcomed by all, to helping the Organization to make progress towards modernization and democratization.

Mr. Kofi Annan has made many sacrifices and undertaken extraordinary efforts, often under very difficult circumstances. It is with gratitude for those efforts that this draft resolution has been submitted. Furthermore, I know that you, Madam President, share these sincere feelings of affection and esteem, and I am equally certain that they are sentiments felt by all for Mr. Kofi Annan. I have no doubt that the draft resolution will meet with unanimous approval, as attested by the growing list of sponsors.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.48/Rev.1, entitled "Tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations", by acclamation?

Draft resolution A/61/L.48/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 61/107).

The President: By adopting resolution 61/107 by acclamation, the General Assembly is paying tribute to one of the most famous sons of Africa, Secretary-General Kofi Annan. His career has been unique. He has risen through the ranks of the United Nations and

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

has devoted his life's service to the Organization. So, today we are not bidding farewell only to the current Secretary-General, but also to one of the longest-serving officials of the United Nations.

As Secretary-General over the past 10 years, he has stood at the helm as the United Nations has become a more effective global actor and as demands for its services have grown. We are grateful to Kofi Annan for having set out a far-reaching reform framework to make the Organization more relevant to the people of the world: a United Nations that lives to serve humanity and the principles of multilateralism. Kofi Annan will leave a lasting legacy. He has guided the United Nations into the twenty-first century with vision and leadership. As a result, the multilateral system is stronger.

The Secretary-General's tireless efforts to promote peace and security were rightfully rewarded in 2001, when both he and the United Nations received the Nobel Peace Prize. Looking back on an outstanding tenure, I wish to reflect upon some of his significant achievements.

First, the United Nations has a clearer sense of purpose and priority. Peace and security, development, human rights and the rule of law are the three pillars of our work. Secondly, through the Millennium Development Goals, we have a programme of action to eradicate poverty and to achieve a safer and fairer world for all, particularly in Africa. Thirdly, one of Kofi Annan's lasting contributions has been to emphasize the interdependence among the global challenges we face today.

It is my sincerest hope that the world will continue to benefit from Kofi Annan's unique experience, wisdom and true dedication to the values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Secretary-General, I wish you and Nane the greatest success in whatever new challenges you choose to undertake in the future. Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to the representative of Niger, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Abani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Secretary-General, as you prepare to leave your post as head of this Organization after 10 busy years of intense activities, of skilful initiatives and of total dedication to the cause of multilateral cooperation, it is a particular honour for me to take the floor on behalf of the African Group to express to you our feelings of pride and gratitude for the remarkable work that you have accomplished. Our heads of State or Government have already expressed to you their great satisfaction and pride at the end of your outstanding tenure in the United Nations as a skilled master of multilateralism aware of his responsibilities towards Africa and towards the international community as a whole.

Mr. Secretary-General, at this final moment, when you pass the torch to your successor, we can only, once again, welcome the fact that our continent has given the Organization one of its finest sons, who was able to make an outstanding contribution to the functioning of today's world. During both of your terms, the world faced many and complex challenges; you were able to make use of your leadership qualities, and your insight so often helped the international community to find a way out of an impasse. Africa, your home continent, has particularly appreciated your efforts to implement programmes relating to the fight against AIDS and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as your bold initiatives for peace and conflict resolution, human rights and the promotion of sustainable development.

Your re-election in 2001 to a second term was striking proof that Africa is not the only region satisfied with your contribution to the Organization. Moreover, your unequalled efforts to increasingly open the United Nations to civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the press will also go down in history as a praiseworthy endeavour.

However, such results cannot be achieved without difficulties, sometimes even brutal ones. But you have been able to overcome all of them with a grace — I would say, even with a calm — that stirred the admiration of all.

Now that you are leaving the forefront of the world stage, we venture to welcome you to the African stage: the Africa you have never stopped loving and serving; the Africa which is grateful to you for having held high its torch for 10 years and which is ready to welcome you once again. What the African Group is saying to you today is more of an "au revoir" than a "farewell".

I would like, Sir, to take this opportunity also to repeat the African Group's welcome to your distinguished successor, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. The African Group, through me, once again expresses to him its congratulations and is pleased to be able to benefit from the experience and skills of a person who will be able to lead the United Nations towards a better world.

The new Secretary-General, as a national of an Asian country, is, we feel, in a good position to know and grasp the matters of urgency to the African continent on all the current issues. As Africa promised him at the time of his appointment on 13 October (see A/61/PV.31), Africa will continue to support him in all of his efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and to promote multilateralism.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Asian Group on this special occasion to pay tribute to the Secretary-General and to administer the oath of office to the Secretary-General-designate of the United Nations.

It was 10 years ago that Mr. Kofi Annan was first sworn in as Secretary-General of the United Nations. We all acknowledged that the job with which he was entrusted was the most difficult and challenging job in the world. The Secretary-General is expected to hear the cries of people from different parts of the world — people who are crying out of fear, hunger and other states of destitution — and to deliver them from their plight, while managing an Organization that is charged with ever-increasing responsibilities while being constrained by ever-limited resources.

Ten years on, and at the end of his illustrious career, we are pleased to note in absolute candour that Mr. Annan has fulfilled the responsibilities entrusted to him. He saw this Organization through many trials and tribulations and onwards into the new millennium. In 2001, in recognition of his leadership and commitment to making the world a better place to live, the United Nations was accorded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work for "a better organized and more peaceful world".

The Asian Group is pleased to note that Mr. Annan leaves behind a legacy that sets the path for us to follow towards making the world a better and more peaceful place to live. He has shown to us that, with commitment and strong will, no challenge is impossible and no obstruction is irremovable. We applaud Mr. Annan for his commitment, dedication and steadfast stand towards that end.

The Asian Group wishes to place on record our appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan for his long, illustrious service to the United Nations and, in particular, for his service as the Secretary-General of the Organization. We wish you, Mr. Kofi Annan, all the very best in your future undertakings.

As we bid farewell to Mr. Kofi Annan, we take comfort in knowing that the important post of Secretary-General of the United Nations is in the safe and steady hands of Asia's very own Mr. Ban Ki-moon. As Chair of the Asian Group, I would be remiss not to mention outright how proud the members of the Asian Group are at having a new Secretary-General from Asia.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon is now entrusted with all our hopes, aspirations and dreams for a peaceful and prosperous world. It is an honourable and heavy responsibility that he takes on as Secretary-General of the United Nations. The States members of the Asian Group will extend our full support and cooperation to him as he leads the United Nations forward.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mrs. Mladineo (Croatia): On the occasion of today's meeting, I have the special honour of speaking on behalf of the Eastern European Group to bid farewell to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan. We honour Mr. Annan for his efforts and his tireless dedication to the work of the United Nations. As the first Secretary-General to be elected from the ranks of the career United Nations staff, Mr. Annan was highly aware of the burden and responsibility he was to carry as the highest-ranking civil servant in the world. His record is proof that immense professional and personal efforts bear fruit. Receiving a mandate in times of historic changes that have reshaped the world, Mr. Annan played an essential role in the life of the Organization.

As Secretary-General, he was confronted with a number of challenges within the Organization and in the international arena. The Organization needed to be revitalized. There was an urgent need for reform that would bring the United Nations in line with the needs of a changed world. At the same time, in the international arena, processes had been triggered by the phenomenon of globalization, the new post-cold-war architecture and the growing importance of human rights and the dignity of individuals, sustainable development, the empowerment of women, as well as other issues that needed adequate responses.

Mr. Annan's mandate was marked by some of the most dramatic of crises around the world, resulting in human suffering on an unprecedented scale. Our part of the world was not immune. For that reason, we highly appreciate the role of the United Nations and Mr. Annan's personal engagement in his various roles during times of crisis.

As a Secretary-General, Mr. Annan has constantly reminded world leaders about the plight of the defenceless and the underprivileged. In the recent years, Mr. Annan focused his attention on creating and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, eradicating hunger and poverty and fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, among other endeavours. He was also an ardent advocate for human rights and development.

Kofi Annan leaves us with the legacy of an unprecedented document, "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), which provides the conceptual framework for substantial overall reform of the United Nations and for its role in the new millennium. While many segments of the document are being implemented, we are aware of the many challenges ahead of us, such as terrorism and ongoing armed conflicts, and the challenges of peacebuilding and fighting hunger and poverty. We must remain committed to addressing them.

Life at the helm of a world body such as the United Nations requires the professional commitment, personal dedication and sacrifice that Mr. Annan was always ready to offer. That was recognized by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize that Mr. Annan and the Organization received in 2001 for their continuous efforts to maintain peace and security.

Allow me to conclude by quoting Mr. Annan himself who said, "More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together" (*press release SG/SM/7262*). We truly believe that Mr. Annan will continue to participate in this common effort even in his private capacity.

Allow me, Secretary-General Annan, to thank you in the name of the Group of Eastern European States and on behalf of my fellow ambassadors for your continuous cooperation and support, and to convey to you our wishes for a rich and meaningful time ahead of you.

At the same time, I would like to convey our appreciation to the incoming Secretary-General, and to transmit our best wishes to him for what lies ahead.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Rouse (Grenada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group on this bittersweet occasion, as we bid farewell to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan upon the completion of a decade of meritorious service to the United Nations and the international community, and as we welcome His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon to the Organization.

"Never walk into an environment and assume that you understand it better than the people who live there". Those were the words of Mr. Annan after he had experienced the harsh realities of his first winter in Minnesota in 1959 — words that seem to have guided him throughout his United Nations career.

For the past 10 years, statements from this very rostrum have welcomed several of the Secretary-General's reports on various agenda items, many of which he has personally led to successful completion. Mr. Annan will be remembered for many initiatives, among them the Millennium Report, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000). Perhaps the one that will always stand out among the many milestones of his tenure is the agreement on and declaration of the Millennium Development Goals in the year 2000. These Goals remain the bedrock standards to be achieved by all countries by the year 2015.

The Secretary-General also adopted many personal priorities. His call to action to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to be one of the most challenging tasks facing leaders as they grapple with numerous new and emerging global realities.

Reform of the United Nations has been at the heart of Mr. Annan's purpose-driven tenure. The Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean wish to take this opportunity to thank him for that profound initiative and to reiterate our commitment to continue vigorously with our contribution to the process of meaningful reform of the Organization in the years ahead so that it can better serve the poor and dispossessed of our world.

Mr. Secretary-General, you will always be remembered for your famous dictum that security cannot be achieved without development, development cannot be achieved without security, and neither can flourish unless the rule of law and respect for human rights are present. We salute you for your willingness to tackle head-on the many challenges facing the Organization.

You have already informed us of your intention to continue your work even during retirement, assisting African countries in realizing their full potential and in becoming food self-sufficient. That announcement is hardly surprising: as you have kept the international community close to your heart for so many years, it would now be difficult to fully withdraw.

In your speech to the Assembly on 19 September 2006 (see A/61/PV.10), you listed three great challenges — security, development, and human rights and the rule of law — which you faced upon your assumption of office in 1997. Leading an Organization so diverse is no easy task, and although you did list some regrets and certain challenges that you had been unable to completely overcome, we know that your desire was to see this body grow in strength and in stature. Indeed, your work was recognized when the Organization was accorded a Nobel Peace Prize in 2001.

Mr. Secretary-General, "we the peoples" will forever be our guiding principle, and if we interpret the Charter the way that you did, the United Nations will be well on its way to achieving its purpose. Your example will continue to be a basis for the work of the United Nations in years to come. We will always remember your quiet dignity, your stoicism in times of trouble, your wisdom and your sense of humour.

Your skilful leadership has been a tremendous asset to the work of the Organization, and you should be justly proud. Ghana, and indeed Africa, must certainly be elated about the achievements of such an illustrious son of the soil in the arena of international peace and security. We thank you especially for your efforts in finding solutions to the crises that we in Latin America and the Caribbean faced during your term. We congratulate you on a job well done and wish you every success, personal contentment and fulfilment in the coming years. To your dear wife, Nane, whose constant and quiet support has helped and sustained you through a most difficult and testing mission, we say thank you, farewell and Godspeed.

As we embark upon a new era at the United Nations, may I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, to once again extend a warm welcome to the Secretary-General-designate, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and to assure him of our full support as he assumes his role at the helm of the Secretariat of the Organization.

The President: I now call on the representative of Malta, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Bonavia (Malta): I have the pleasure and honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

On this important occasion, I should like to express our great appreciation for Mr. Kofi Annan's outstanding performance as Secretary-General over the past 10 years. Mr. Annan's dedication to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations has been exemplary. During his tenure, he has initiated far-ranging reforms that will have a lasting effect on our Organization. He has shown exceptional courage and determination in the pursuit of peace, development and human rights.

Mr. Annan has been at the helm of the United Nations during a period that has witnessed upheaval, uncertainty and frustrated hopes. New threats have arisen, compounding many of the unsolved problems inherited from the past. The community of nations continues to be severely challenged in its quest for peace and security, for development and the elimination of poverty, disease and suffering, and for the promotion and defence of individual rights. The objectives enshrined in the Charter — to promote peace, social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom — remain as vital as they were six decades ago.

Mr. Annan's life and career have been dedicated to meeting the challenges and nurturing the aspirations of our times. His priorities as Secretary-General have been to revitalize the United Nations through a comprehensive programme of reform; to strengthen the Organization's traditional work in the areas of development and the maintenance of international peace and security; to encourage and advocate human rights, the rule of law and the universal values of equality, tolerance and human dignity, found in the United Nations Charter; and to restore public confidence in the Organization by reaching out to new partners and by, in his words, "bringing the United Nations closer to the people".

The road has been paved with difficulties and setbacks. One recalls the tragic day of 19 August 2003, when 17 officials were killed in Baghdad. But there have also been major highlights. On 10 December 2001, as head of the United Nations, Mr. Annan received the Nobel Peace Prize, in the Nobel Committee's words, in recognition of the way that he had "been pre-eminent in bringing new life to the Organization".

Mr. Annan's experience in his office reminds us of the words of the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie — which are often quoted — that this job is the most impossible one on Earth. The response of Mr. Annan to that sentiment is characteristic of his determination and resilience: he sees it as the best job on Earth. The job of Secretary-General is both daunting and exhilarating. The man who has carried it out so successfully for the past 10 years is indeed impressive.

Mr. Annan leaves his post with the best reward to which a public servant can aspire: the satisfaction of a job — that of Secretary-General — well done. In addition, he takes with him our deepest admiration and our best wishes for the future.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): We salute today Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his decade of dedicated service as the United Nations chief diplomat and administrator.

Since early in his first term, Kofi Annan has worked tirelessly to make the United Nations a more efficient and effective Organization. He has understood the need for the United Nations to evolve and reform to meet the challenges of today's world, and to use its resources wisely to better serve its Member States and the millions of people who look to the United Nations to help them improve their lives.

He has used his good offices and the resources of the United Nations to address numerous conflicts, potential conflicts and other threats to international peace and security, and was recognized for his efforts with a Nobel Peace Prize.

He has done his utmost to ensure that Africa has remained prominent on the global agenda and to keep the world's attention focused on that continent's security, humanitarian and development needs. He has been a strong voice condemning terrorism, and has pushed the United Nations to do its part in the global struggle against extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and terrorist threats.

He has been a champion of human rights, urging Governments to respect the rights of their own citizens, to speak out in response to human rights violations wherever they occur, and to make the United Nations own human rights machinery more effective.

He rightly recognized that the United Nations needed to reach out to the private sector for resources and expertise, and he has led the way in forming productive new partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and business.

He has been an intellectual force in global dialogue, providing a steady stream of ideas and proposals that helped shape the framework of the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit.

Perhaps his overriding goal has been to make the United Nations and its programmes and services more accessible and more responsive to the needs of ordinary people, and especially to those who often find themselves at particular disadvantage — women, children, refugees, the displaced and the poor.

Kofi Annan has many other accomplishments to his credit, large and small, in his 10 years of service and leadership as Secretary-General, and over his entire 44-year career with the United Nations. He has been driven by his belief that the individual matters, that nations can act together to make the world a better place, and that the United Nations was the instrument for turning his beliefs into action.

Beginning 1 January, the Secretariat will be entrusted to the capable hands of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who commands our full respect. In his long and distinguished career, he has served with honour and integrity. We have no doubt that those virtues will carry over into his tenure here as Secretary-General. We have full confidence in his abilities, his goodwill and his desire to serve and to achieve. A number of challenges remain, particularly in the area of management reform. We look forward to working with the new Secretary-General and other Member States to achieve our shared goal of making the United Nations stronger and more effective and thus further honour Kofi Annan's vision.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Madam President, let me thank you once again, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, for having given us an opportunity to honour the legacy of our beloved Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, one last time.

In one of the finest hours of the United Nations, under the leadership of Kofi Annan, the largest number ever of heads of State or Government came to New York in September 2000 to attend the Millennium Summit. They adopted the historic Millennium Declaration, which stated, among other things:

> "We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed." (*resolution 55/2, para. 5*)

With those few words, the heads of State or Government attending the Millennium Summit captured what I believe to be what Secretary-General Kofi Annan is essentially about. That is, Kofi Annan has tried his best to give globalization a human face. He has been at the forefront of the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment. At the same time, he has stood tall in defence of the heavily challenged multilateral rules-based system, even in difficult times. The Group of 77 and China is proud and honoured to have been among the foot soldiers of "General" Kofi Annan throughout the fight for global economic and social development. We are pleased to have supported the Secretary-General in protecting the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which guide the work of the General Assembly.

There are no words to describe the way we feel on such a special and historic occasion as this — the eighth time that the Office of the Secretary-General is receiving a new occupant. On the one hand, we are proud that Kofi Annan, the son of African soil, has served the world with honour and has now reached the point where he can move to the more relaxed — and, I daresay, more predictable — future that lies ahead. On the other hand, we are delighted that the great continent of Asia has once again given to this Organization one of its best and most capable sons in the person of Secretary-General-designate Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to whom we pledge our support in helping him achieve the best for this Organization.

Long before globalization brought us instant communication technology that often leaves us with little time to think or analyse what we have to say, people around the world used to write letters to each other, even to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I hope, Madam President, that you will allow me to read my letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a letter that I believe expresses the feelings many of us have for him.

> "Dear Secretary-General Kofi Annan,
>
> "Many words will be spoken today and in the near future about how much we will miss you. It is true that your calming influence and wisdom — indeed, your inspiration and dignity — will be greatly missed. But the greater truth is that those whose hearts will be torn asunder most by your departure are the poor and the underprivileged of this world. They include millions whose lives are withering away under the onslaught of curable and incurable pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. I also daresay that on 31 December 2006, when you leave your office, the light of hope for the people of Palestine, who live under occupation, will shine even less bright.
>
> "One thing that you can take away from New York with great pride is that throughout your term, you always kept faith with the downtrodden and the underprivileged. You always spoke softly,

but your voice was loudest when you fearlessly told the truth to the powerful, reminding them never to forget those who are called the least among us. And when circumstances forced you to stay quiet, your silence was even louder.

"Today, the world is engaged in a race — albeit a very slow race at this time — to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The fact is, however, that we are able to discuss the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, because of your leadership and commitment to the poor.

"You have also helped change the global dialogue by forcing us to focus simultaneously on three challenges: the security challenge, the development challenge and the challenge of upholding human rights and the rule of law. With great passion, you have made a convincing argument that there can be no security without development, and that neither can be enjoyed without human rights and the rule of law.

"In short, you have always been one of us. We are privileged to have known you.

"In conclusion, may I remind you, Secretary-General, that five years ago, you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of this beloved United Nations, to which you gave more than 40 of the best years of your life. In the Nobel lecture that you delivered in Oslo, Norway, you began by saying:

> "'Today, in Afghanistan, a girl will be born. Her mother will hold her and feed her, comfort her and care for her — just as any mother would anywhere in the world. In these most basic acts of human nature, humanity knows no divisions. But to be born a girl in today' s Afghanistan is to begin life centuries away from the prosperity that one small part of humanity has achieved. It is to live under conditions that many of us in this hall would consider inhuman. Truly, it is as if it were a tale of two planets.'

"One of the most eloquent and gifted souls to come from the part of Asia that you referred to in your Nobel lecture is none other than the mystical poet Rumi. In his writings and poems, Rumi captured the life of ordinary people and spoke of unity and togetherness.

"Speaking of togetherness, I cannot end this tribute to you without at the same time saluting Mrs. Nane Annan, whom you have called your life partner, your strength and your friend who has been with you even in the darkest days. For us, watching both of you from afar, we will never forget how Nane has always been at your side, exuding quiet strength and sending a message to all those who come to serve this United Nations with spouses and families that there indeed is life beyond the resolutions, the declarations and the endless meetings in the basement of this Assembly building. For that, we thank Nane.

"So, in celebration of a job well done, and in recognition of your tireless efforts to strengthen the United Nations, allow me, Secretary-General, to conclude by offering you a gift of the words of the poet Rumi, who is the spiritual great-grandfather of the girl born in Afghanistan whom you recalled in your Nobel lecture. The words of Rumi recognize that, even though there may be a public and a private life, there is only one existence that is captured in the moment:

> "'Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing,
>
> There is a field. I'll meet you there.
>
> When the soul lies down in that grass, The world is too full to talk about.
>
> Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other* do not make any sense.'

"With those words, allow me once again, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to say goodbye, dear friend."

But, as in any good letter, there is also a P.S.:

"By the way, Secretary-General, you can relax wherever you go. Your legacy and your achievements are now in the good hands of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whom we will support just as we did you."

The President: I now call on the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union would like to join other delegations in expressing our deep appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan for his uncompromising dedication to the common good of humanity during his term as Secretary-General of the United Nations. He has made an outstanding and lasting contribution to practically every field of activity in which the Organization is engaged: peace and security, development and human rights, as well the internal reform of the United Nations.

It has often been remarked that, of all the impossible positions in the world, that of Secretary-General of the United Nations must be the most impossible. All the hopes of humankind focus on the United Nations; all the fears are brought to its door. The Secretary-General is the embodiment of the Organization. His voice is the voice of the nations of the world united.

One of the most remarkable achievements of Mr. Annan is that he has been able to build such a consensus on how to address so many of the seemingly intractable problems that the international community has faced during the past decade. Moreover, he has had the strength of character to provide the necessary moral leadership to show the way forward even when we, the Member States, have been too distracted by our national concerns to perform that function.

As Secretary-General, Mr. Annan has played an invaluable role in the revitalization of the United Nations system. He has had a clear vision on how this institution — which was created 60 years ago under very different circumstances — could be reformed in a way that would allow it to respond effectively to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Annan has been a particularly eloquent and persistent spokesman for human rights and the rights of women. He has reminded us that it is the welfare of the individual that is at the core of the mission of the United Nations, regardless of the particular field of activity. It was largely thanks to his efforts that heads of State or Government gathered in New York in September 2005 to express their joint conviction that peace and security, development and respect for human rights are fundamentally interlinked. That understanding, together with the institutional expression given to it in the form of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, will be a lasting monument to the accomplishments of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

It is thus with profound admiration and gratitude that the European Union wishes to express its appreciation to Mr. Annan for the remarkable work he has done in his present role. We look forward to supporting him in his future endeavours for the good of humanity. We also want to thank Mrs. Nane Annan for her contribution and support, and we wish her all the best.

In today's world, the challenges facing the Secretary-General are enormous. On behalf of the European Union, I also want to wish the incoming Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, every success in carrying out these important responsibilities. We look forward to working in close cooperation with him.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Iraq, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to speak today on behalf of the Group of Arab States to express the Group's gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan for his efforts of the past decade — the culmination of his more than 40 years of service to the United Nations. I wish to commend his tireless pursuit of the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In the first five years of his tenure, Mr. Kofi Annan led the Organization in a manner that enabled it to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century. In the past five years, we have witnessed unprecedented dedication on his part in moving the process of United Nations reform forward. That constituted an important turning point in the life of this Organization, with the most important milestones being the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and of the Human Rights Council.

During the 10-year period in which he has been at the helm of the Organization, the world has seen major international political, security, economic and social developments, as well as many challenges to international peace and security. We have all noted his tireless efforts to extinguish fires and settle disputes and wars, as well as his constant endeavours to arrive at peaceful settlements to thorny questions.

The Middle East was one of the hotbeds of tension on which Mr. Kofi Annan focused his attention. He has worked to achieve an honourable and just solution to the question of Palestine — one that would guarantee peace and security in the Middle East region. He has stood side by side with the Palestinian people in their time of crisis, in support of their right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State.

Africa can be proud of its illustrious son. We would say to Africa that Kofi Annan, following his honourable record in service of the United Nations and its purposes and principles, is no longer a son of Africa alone; he is the son of all of humanity. It is a great pleasure for us to recognize his dedication in service of the United Nations. His legacy will live on in the annals of the Organization.

I am also pleased and honoured, on this important occasion, to extend, on behalf of the Arab Group, our heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea on his election as Secretary-General. He is fully qualified to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor. There is no doubt that he will bring to that Office the diversity and human wealth of the Asian continent. Those attributes will also serve well in leading the Organization and in building bridges of understanding and dialogue among cultures. The world's diversity will therefore become a force for unity and strength, not a cause for conflict and weakness. We are hopeful that his skills will contribute to the achievement of our common objectives of peace, security and development. We hope also that his expertise in international relations will help us to arrive at the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We hope also that, during his tenure at the helm of the Organization, the question of Palestine will receive the attention it deserves and that a Palestinian State will finally be established.

I would like to reaffirm the Arab Group's determination to provide every possible support to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, so that he can undertake the important responsibilities he is shouldering as eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Finally, we wish Mr. Kofi Annan a prosperous future in the service of humanity.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Cuba, who will speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the privilege to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on this very special occasion, as the Organization and its Members gather to bid farewell to and recognize the achievements of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Non-Aligned Movement takes this opportunity to express its deep appreciation for the outstanding work done over these past 10 years by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, as well as for his devotion to the Organization.

There is no doubt that much could be written about the character and intelligence shown by Mr. Annan throughout his tenure at the helm of the United Nations.

I am sure that my colleagues will agree that it is no easy task to lead the United Nations — an international Organization whose purposes and principles, enshrined in the Charter, are, inter alia, to maintain international peace and security, facilitate international cooperation, and promote economic development and social equity. Indeed, Mr. Annan's great diplomatic skills have helped to shape the United Nations we have today.

An honoured son of the brotherly African continent, he has used the ancient wisdom of its peoples in seeking solutions to humankind's most important problems. The Non-Aligned Movement thanks him for the vital role he has played in addressing the many global challenges that exist. The Non-Aligned Movement acknowledges his contribution to international peace and security and his tireless efforts to achieve a better world. We will always remember him for having consistently included development concerns on the international agenda. The Millennium Development Goals are a case in point.

We also acknowledge his human sensitivity, reflected in his personal commitment to tackling the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, which affects millions of people throughout the world. We are confident that the Organization will build upon its past achievements and move ahead to become an even more effective body under the leadership of the new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Non-Aligned Movement would like to welcome Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and pledges him its full support and cooperation. He is about to take on what a former Secretary-General once described as the most impossible job on Earth. But Mr. Ban Ki-moon comes from a region where patience, modesty and wisdom are virtues. We are sure that he will be equal to the new responsibilities that Member States have entrusted to him and that he will make the best use of the authority invested in his office by the Charter.

On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, I wish Mr. Kofi Annan every success in his future professional and personal endeavours. We also wish every success to Mr. Ban Ki-moon as our new Secretary-General.

The President: I give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General: I am deeply honoured and truly touched by the words that have been spoken. After 10 wonderful years as Secretary-General, it is humbling to be recognized for simply doing what you love to do.

Despite many difficulties and some setbacks, in the past decade we have achieved much that I am proud of. In a time of sweeping change and great challenge, the United Nations re-moulded and reoriented itself. It became more transparent, accountable and responsive. It began to better address the needs of individuals worldwide. It faced emerging threats, as well as familiar ones, head on. And, as we have heard this morning, it internalized the notions that development, security and human rights must go hand in hand, that there can be no security without development and no development without security, and that neither can be sustained in the longer term without being rooted in the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Credit for those changes must also go, first of all, to you — the States Members of the Organization. You have guided the Organization, supported its mission and made far-reaching reform possible. Let me also thank the truly exceptional men and women who serve the United Nations. Whatever I have achieved I owe to their commitment and support, both in the field and at Headquarters. It is they who have lent me their shoulders; it is they who deserve your praise and my gratitude.

For me, personally, their and your steadfast support and encouragement have often made the difference between an impossible job and an exhilarating one. Their friendship has sustained me over the years, and it is the treasure that I shall take into private life. I depart convinced that today's United Nations does more than ever before and that it does it better than ever before. Yet our work is far from complete. Indeed, it will never be complete. It falls to my successor to carry forward the valuable mission of the United Nations. From the contacts that I have had with him, I already know that you have chosen well. Our Organization will be in safe hands.

Mr. Ban, let me congratulate you again on your appointment. You have already had a long and very distinguished career in international diplomacy. But I can safely tell you that your most rewarding years lie just ahead. I wish you both the strength and the courage to make the most of them.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

The General Assembly will now continue with the appointment process of the Secretary-General-designate, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I am deeply honoured to welcome the Secretary-General-designate, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to take the oath of office. I wish once again to extend my congratulations to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his appointment as the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations. He will follow a long line of world-class leaders stretching back over 60 years. Each one has embodied the values and principles of the Charter through his own unique style and approach.

I am confident that the Secretary-General-designate, Ban Ki-moon, will lead the Organization wisely and with determination and integrity. This is a reflection not only of his core Asian values, but also of his faith in the United Nations family and his personal commitment to ensure that it lives up to its universal values and principles.

Ban Ki-moon has already signalled his commitment to lead the Organization in a focused and action-oriented manner, working transparently, flexibly and honestly with Member States to, as he puts it, cut through the fog of mistrust so that, working in harmony, the United Nations can deliver more for those who need it most. Indeed, the credibility of the Organization will be tested by our ability to continue to work in unity with purpose to meet the expectations of millions of people around the world. The promises that the United Nations has made should be kept.

As President of the General Assembly, I am ready to work in close cooperation with Secretary-General-designate Ban Ki-moon on the three challenges that he has made priorities once he takes office on 1 January 2007: first, to continue to reform the Secretariat by bolstering the integrity, professionalism and morale of staff; secondly, to work to heal divisions and rebuild trust among Member States, the Secretariat and the global public, which we serve; and thirdly, to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of the United Nations in implementing its mandates and to increase the coordination and harmonization of the work of its various parts.

As he prepares to assume his responsibilities and duties, I would appeal to all members once again to extend to him their utmost support and cooperation. Next year, we could begin a new era of closer harmony at the United Nations. There are many important matters of common concern that require our close attention. We have to work more closely together, in a spirit of cooperation, mutual trust and collective responsibility.

The post of Secretary-General is considered to be one of the most difficult jobs in the world. I am confident that, leading by example, Ban Ki-moon has what it takes to make a great contribution to the Organization and to the global public that it exists to serve. Let me take this opportunity to wish him the greatest success in this, our common endeavour.

I now invite the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Trusteeship Council, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees to come to the platform.

The President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Trusteeship Council, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees took places on the platform.

The President: I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the Secretary-General-designate, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to the platform.

The Chief of Protocol escorted the Secretary-General-designate, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to the platform.

The President: Your Excellency, by resolution 61/3 of 13 October 2006, the General Assembly has appointed you Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2007 and ending on 31 December 2011.

I ask Mr. Ban to repeat after me the oath of office.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon: I, Ban Ki-moon, solemnly swear to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as Secretary-General of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other authority external to the Organization.

The Chief of Protocol escorted the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Trusteeship Council, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees from the platform.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General-designate, to make a statement.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon: Madam President of the General Assembly, Secretary-General and Madam Annan, Presidents of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, Mr. Han Seung-soo, Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear new colleagues: I thank you warmly for you congratulations. Madam President and Secretary-General Annan, let me say how much I appreciate your words of encouragement as I contemplate the responsibilities before me.

I stand before all of you today, deeply mindful of the words of the oath I have just taken: loyalty, discretion, conscience — these, together with the Charter, will be my watchwords as I carry out my duties as Secretary-General. To illustrate my faith in the Charter, today I asked the Secretariat to create a new practice by placing my left hand on the Charter while taking the oath.

Secretary-General Annan, I am all the more humbled because it is you I am succeeding in what you have described as the world's most exalting job. It is an honour to follow in your revered footsteps. I add my voice to the many tributes that have been paid to you today. Every one of them is richly deserved. Your tenure has been marked by high ideals, noble aspirations and bold initiatives. Your courage and vision have inspired the world. You have led the Organization through challenging times and ushered it firmly into the twenty-first century. You have given the United Nations new relevance to people's lives. You have been exceptionally generous to me with your wisdom and guidance, as I prepare to build on your legacy.

Thanks to the early conclusion of the appointment process, I have had the unprecedented privilege of more than two months of preparation before taking office. I have spent much of this time listening to and learning from my future colleagues among the delegations, in the Secretariat and in the wider United Nations family.

I have witnessed at first hand the high level of professionalism, dedication and know-how that exists throughout the United Nations. Armed with that knowledge, I look forward even more to working with the able and courageous men and women who serve this Organization every day, often in difficult circumstances, sometimes in dangerous ones.

Today, as we pay tribute to Secretary-General Annan's lifelong devotion to the international civil service, we also pay tribute to the calling itself. This path is narrow and steep and transcends national borders and partisan interests. Many stumble along the way, or take easier detours. Yet, drawn to the enduring purposes and principles of the Charter, young women and men from all parts of the world, from every creed and every circumstance, still yearn to follow this path less travelled. Their enthusiasm and their idealism will animate this Organization for decades to come.

One of my core tasks will be to breathe new life and inject renewed confidence into the sometimes weary Secretariat. As Secretary-General, I will aim to reward the talent and skill of staff, while making optimal use of their experience and expertise. I will seek to improve our systems for human resource management and career development, offering opportunities for training and mobility. With the United Nations taking on a more and more global role, United Nations staff members should also be able to be more mobile and multifunctional.

At the same time, I will seek to set the highest ethical standard. The good name of the United Nations is one of its most valuable assets — but also one of its most vulnerable. The Charter calls on staff to uphold the highest levels of efficiency, competence and integrity, and I will seek to ensure that a solid reputation for living up to that standard is built. I assure you that I will lead by example. In this way, I will work to enhance morale, professionalism and accountability among staff members, which in turn will help us serve Member States better and restore trust in the Organization.

(*spoke in French*)

Equally, we should remind ourselves of what the Charter and the Report of the Preparatory Commission at the San Francisco Conference in 1945 said about the relationship between the Member States and the Secretariat. Neither of these founding documents suggests, at any point, that the Secretariat should be independent of the Member States. Indeed, without States, neither the Secretariat nor the Organization itself would have meaning or purpose.

Member States need a dynamic and courageous Secretariat, not one that is passive and risk-averse. The time has come for a new type of relations between the Secretariat and Member States. The dark night of distrust and indifference has lasted far too long. We can begin by saying what we mean, and meaning what we say.

We cannot change everything at once. But we can build progress in a few areas, and so make way for progress in many more. That will require intensive and continuous dialogue. It will require us to work together transparently, and with flexibility and integrity. And it will require us to start with an open mind. Today, I ask both colleagues and Member States to work with me in that spirit. You have the right to expect the same of me.

(*spoke in English*)

As I have pledged today, my sole duty is to the Organization, its Charter and its 192 Member States. Each brings something special to our common endeavour. Each must be heard. Ultimately, we are all — Secretariat and Member States alike — accountable to "we the peoples". Our publics will not long respect an Organization, or tolerate a Secretary-General, who caters to some while ignoring the desperate plight of others. Together, we can — and must — do better. Our peoples and our future depend on it.

By strengthening the three pillars of the United Nations — security, development and human rights — we can build a more peaceful, more prosperous and more just world for our succeeding generations. As we pursue our collective endeavour to reach that goal, my first priority will be to restore trust. I will seek to act as a harmonizer and bridge-builder. And I hope to become known to all of you —Member States and Secretariat alike — as a Secretary-General who is accessible, hard-working and prepared to listen attentively.

I will do everything in my power to ensure that our United Nations can live up to its name and be truly united, so that we can live up to the hopes that so many people around the world place in this institution, which is unique in the annals of human history.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General-designate for his statement.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General-designate, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 104.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/61/PV.79

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

79th plenary meeting

Thursday, 14 December 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa .... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

The President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on agenda items 28 to 39, 110 and 118. I request the Rapporteur of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, Ms. Rana Salayeva of Azerbaijan, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

Ms. Salayeva (Azerbaijan), Rapporteur of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee): It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the General Assembly the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) submitted under agenda items 28 to 39, 110 and 118. Those reports are contained in documents A/61/404 to A/61/417 and they include the texts of draft resolutions and draft decisions recommended to the General Assembly for adoption. For the convenience of delegations, the Secretariat has prepared a checklist of Fourth Committee reports, which is contained in document A/C.4/61/INF/3*.

During the main part of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee held 27 formal meetings and adopted 25 draft resolutions and two draft decisions. Consistent with established practice, the Working Group of the Whole established by the Committee under agenda item 30, entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", also held informal meetings in the course of which it agreed on the texts of the two draft resolutions.

The work of the Fourth Committee was performed in a constructive environment and was done in both a results-oriented and flexible manner. The Committee held interactive dialogue sessions with the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and with the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the item entitled "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects".

Likewise, the Committee benefited from an interactive dialogue session with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Rector of the University for Peace, the Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Secretary of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. That format allowed for the active participation of delegations in the deliberations of the Fourth Committee.

The report submitted under agenda item 28, "University for Peace", is contained in document A/61/404. The draft resolution submitted under that agenda item is contained in paragraph 7 of the report of the Fourth Committee. In conformity with General

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Assembly resolution 58/316, this item is to be continued every three years and will next be taken up at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The report submitted under agenda item 29, entitled "Effects of atomic radiation", is contained in document A/61/405. The Fourth Committee considered the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, contained in document A/61/46 and Corr.1. On this item, the Committee heard a very informative presentation by the Secretary of the Scientific Committee. The draft resolution submitted under this agenda item is contained in paragraph 7 of the report of the Fourth Committee.

The report submitted under agenda item 30, entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", is contained in document A/61/406. In considering this item, the Fourth Committee held several informal meetings of a Working Group of the Whole, chaired by the delegation of France. The Working Group formulated two draft resolutions, which were adopted by the Committee without a vote and are contained in paragraph 15 of the report.

The report submitted under agenda item 31, entitled "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East", is contained in document A/61/407. The Fourth Committee considered the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, issued under the symbol A/61/13, as well as the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, issued under the symbol A/61/347, and various reports of the Secretary-General. Under this item, the Committee adopted four draft resolutions by recorded votes. The draft resolutions submitted under this agenda item are contained in paragraph 19 of the report of the Fourth Committee. The Committee recommends those draft resolutions for adoption by the General Assembly.

The report on agenda item 32, entitled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories", is contained in document A/61/408. The Fourth Committee considered the report of the Special Committee concerning the protection and the promotion of the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories, published under the symbol A/61/500, as well as other reports of the Secretary-General issued under this item. The Fourth Committee had before it six draft resolutions and adopted five of them, which are contained in paragraph 25 of its report. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt those five draft resolutions.

The report on agenda item 33, entitled "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects", is contained in document A/61/409. The Fourth Committee held an interactive dialogue with Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and held a general debate on this item. The Committee will resume its consideration of this item after receiving the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations next year.

The report on agenda item 34, entitled "Questions relating to information", is contained in document A/61/410. The Fourth Committee reviewed the report of the Committee on Information (A/61/21 and Add.1) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/216) and heard a statement by Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, with whom the Committee also held an interactive dialogue meeting. The Committee adopted, without a vote, two draft resolutions and one draft decision on the increase in the membership of the Committee on Information, which are contained in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report of the Committee, respectively. By the terms of the draft decision, the Dominican Republic and Thailand would be appointed as members of the Committee on Information, and therefore the membership of the Committee would increase from 108 to 110 members. The Fourth Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolutions and the draft decision.

The Fourth Committee considered the decolonization items in one cluster, with a single general debate for all decolonization items.

The report presented under agenda item 35, entitled "Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations", is contained in document A/61/411. The draft resolution submitted under this item is reflected in paragraph 7 of the report. The Fourth Committee recommends its adoption by the General Assembly.

The report submitted under agenda item 36, entitled "Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories", is contained in document A/61/412. Under that item, the Fourth Committee adopted a draft resolution, which is contained in paragraph 7 of the report. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt it.

The report submitted under agenda item 37, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations", is contained in document A/61/413. The Fourth Committee recommends that the draft resolution contained in paragraph 8 of the report be adopted by the General Assembly.

The report submitted under agenda item 38, entitled "Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories", is contained in document A/61/414. The Fourth Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution that appears in paragraph 6 of the report.

The report submitted under agenda item 39, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples", is contained in document A/61/415. The Fourth Committee adopted six draft resolutions and one draft decision under this item. The Fourth Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt the six draft resolutions contained in paragraph 29 of the report and the draft decision contained in paragraph 30.

The report submitted under agenda item 110, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", is contained in document A/61/416. The Fourth Committee approved the draft programme of work of the Committee for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, as contained in the annex to the report of the Committee.

The report submitted under agenda item 118, entitled "Programme planning", is contained in document A/61/417.

At this point, I would like to pay tribute to all delegations for the remarkable spirit of cooperation which prevailed in the work of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. On behalf of the Bureau of the Fourth Committee, I would like to express our deep gratitude to all delegations that helped the Committee reach consensus on many draft resolutions and draft decisions.

I wish to pay a special tribute to the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, Ambassador Madhu Raman Acharya of Nepal. His in-depth knowledge of the wide range of subjects considered by the Committee allowed him to lead the Committee with great efficiency.

I would also like to express my appreciation to other members of the Bureau, namely Mr. Mahieddine Djeffal of Algeria, Ms. Mónica Bolaños-Pérez of Guatemala and Mr. Urban Andersson of Sweden, with whom I had the pleasure of working and who contributed significantly to the success of the Fourth Committee.

I should also like to thank the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Saijin Zhang, as well as the Political Affairs Officer, Ms. Tatyana Shestakova, and the rest of the dedicated team for their professional assistance.

In conclusion, I respectfully submit to the General Assembly for consideration and approval the recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee which appear in the reports published under the symbols A/61/404 to A/61/417.

The President: I thank the Rapporteur of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that:

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a

> delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified to the contrary in advance.

That means that where recorded votes were taken, we will do the same. I should also hope that we will proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

Before proceeding further, I would like once again to draw the attention of members to a note by the Secretariat entitled "Checklist of reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) to the General Assembly on agenda items 28 to 39, 110 and 118", which has been circulated as document A/C.4/61/INF/3. The note has been distributed disk to disk in the General Assembly Hall as a reference guide for action on draft resolutions and decisions recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in its reports. In this connection, members will find in column two of the note the numbers of the draft resolutions or the meetings of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, with the corresponding numbers for action in plenary meeting in column five of the same note.

Agenda item 28

University for Peace

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/404)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Special Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/108).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 28?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 29

Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/405)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Special Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/109).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 30

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/406)

The President: The Assembly has before it two draft resolutions recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 15 of its report. We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I and II.

Draft resolution I is entitled "United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response". The Special

Political and Decolonization Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 61/110).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space". The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 61/111).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 30?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 31

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/407)

The President: The Assembly has before it four draft resolutions recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 19 of its report. We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I to IV, one by one. After all the votes have been taken, representatives will have the opportunity to explain their votes.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Assistance to Palestine refugees". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu

Draft resolution I was adopted by 173 votes to 1, with 10 abstentions (resolution 61/112).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu

Draft resolution II was adopted by 170 votes to 6, with 8 abstentions (resolution 61/113).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu

Draft resolution III was adopted by 169 votes to 6, with 8 abstentions (resolution 61/114).

The President: We now turn to draft resolution IV, entitled "Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Fiji, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu

Draft resolution IV was adopted by 170 votes to 6, with 8 abstentions (resolution 61/115).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 31?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 32

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/408)

The President: The Assembly has before it five draft resolutions recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in paragraph 25 of its report. We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I to V, one by one. After all the decisions have been taken, representatives will again have the opportunity to explain their votes.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Vanuatu

Draft resolution I was adopted by 90 votes to 9, with 81 abstentions (resolution 61/116).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Angola, Australia, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Uganda, Vanuatu

Draft resolution II was adopted by 165 votes to 7, with 10 abstentions (resolution 61/117).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Uganda, Vanuatu

Draft resolution III was adopted by 162 votes to 8, with 10 abstentions (resolution 61/118).

The President: Draft resolution IV is entitled "Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Honduras, Malawi, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Uganda, Vanuatu

Draft resolution IV was adopted by 157 votes to 9, with 14 abstentions (resolution 61/119).

[Subsequently, the delegation of India advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Draft resolution V is entitled "The occupied Syrian Golan". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Tuvalu

Abstaining:

Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Haiti, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, United States of America, Vanuatu

Draft resolution V was adopted by 163 votes to 2, with 16 abstentions (resolution 61/120).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 32.

Agenda item 33

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/409)

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) contained in document A/61/409?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 33.

Agenda item 34

Questions relating to information

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/410)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 9 of its report and a draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 10 of the same report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution and the draft decision.

The draft resolution, entitled "Questions relating to Information", is in two parts. Part A is entitled "Information in the service of humanity"; part B is entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities".

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/121 A and B).

The President: We turn now to the draft decision, entitled "Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information". The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 35

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/411)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

France, Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The draft resolution was adopted by 179 votes to none, with 4 abstentions (resolution 61/122).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 35?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 36

Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/412)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The draft resolution was adopted by 179 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions (resolution 61/123).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 36?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 37

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/413)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

Mr. Romeu (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to propose two amendments to the draft resolution contained in paragraph 8 of the report (A/61/413), under agenda item 37, in order to harmonize the text of the draft resolution with that of the resolution on the same subject adopted in July by the Economic and Social Council.

In operative paragraph 12 of the draft resolution, the word "resolution" should be in the singular and the words "and 598 (XXX) of 2 July 2004" and the associated footnote should be deleted.

The second amendment would delete operative paragraph 13 of the draft resolution. Finally, it would be necessary to renumber all subsequent paragraphs.

I understand that all of the amendments that I have just presented orally have been distributed to delegations in writing. I trust that, with the foregoing explanation, the General Assembly will be able to adopt these oral amendments without a vote. However, I am aware that some delegations may not have had sufficient time to consider them in depth.

Mr. Jaafari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We listened carefully to the statement just made by the preceding speaker, who proposed amendments to the draft resolution recommended in document A/61/413, under agenda item 37. Those amendments have just been orally proposed, and I believe that they were distributed by e-mail late last night. Many Member States — particularly members of the Special Committee of 24 — have thus not had time to consider the proposed amendments. Therefore, on behalf of the members of the Special Committee of 24 and other States concerned, I request that the consideration of this item be postponed to enable the members of the Special Committee of 24 and other States to negotiate with the delegation proposing the amendments, with a view to reaching a consensus.

The President: Members have heard the proposal made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. If I hear no objection, the Assembly will postpone its consideration of this report to a later date to be announced.

It was so decided.

Agenda item 38

Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/414)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/124).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 39

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/415)

The President: The Assembly has before it six draft resolutions recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 29 of its report and a draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 30 of the same report.

I now call on the representative of Belarus, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before the Assembly takes action on those recommendations.

Mr. Yaroshevich (Belarus): Belarus will not participate in the voting on draft resolution I, "Question of Western Sahara". When the lines of division between our two good friends are so deep, we cannot help becoming hostage to the lack of understanding between them — and hostages' hands are tied.

Issues such as that of Western Sahara cannot be positively influenced by a vote of the General Assembly alone if the essential agreement between the States parties most concerned is not in place. We again ask our trusted partners and friends in the Non-Aligned Movement, Algeria and Morocco, to rally all available goodwill and determination to seek a mutually acceptable solution in the course of an open and frank dialogue.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I to VI and on the draft decision, one by one. After all of the decisions have been taken, representatives will again have the opportunity to explain their vote or position.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Question of Western Sahara". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Botswana, Chad, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Oman, Palau, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Vanuatu, Yemen

Draft resolution I was adopted by 70 votes to none, with 91 abstentions (resolution 61/125).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Question of New Caledonia". The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 61/126).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Question of Tokelau". The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 61/127).

The President: Draft resolution IV is entitled "Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands". This draft resolution is in two parts. Part A is entitled "General". Part B is entitled "Individual Territories". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Samoa, United States of America

Draft resolution IV was adopted by 173 votes to none, with 4 abstentions (resolution 61/128).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Saint Lucia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Draft resolution V is entitled "Dissemination of information on decolonization".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

France

Draft resolution V was adopted by 176 votes to 3, with 1 abstention (resolution 61/129).

The President: Draft resolution VI is entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Belgium, France

Draft resolution VI was adopted by 176 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions (resolution 61/130).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Mexico advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn now to the draft decision entitled "Question of Gibraltar". The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their votes or positions.

Mr. Romeu (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Spanish delegation voted in favour of resolution 61/128, which refers to various Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Spain supports the application of the principle of self-determination to the Territories included in that omnibus resolution. At the same time, my delegation recalls that the principle of self-determination is not the only important principle involved in carrying out the decolonization of Non-Self-Governing Territories. In certain cases, what applies is the principle of territorial integrity, in accordance with the doctrine established in a number of General Assembly resolutions.

One such case is that of Gibraltar, the subject of a specific decision that has just been adopted by consensus. In that respect, I would note that, in the decolonization process for that Territory, Spain, in conformity with the mandate of the General Assembly, is willing to move forward without delay towards a definitive solution that can be the result only of negotiation with the United Kingdom, as the administering Power, in which the interests and aspirations of Gibraltar must be heeded.

Mr. Limeres (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine delegation regrets that the General Assembly has again faced a voting scenario on this question, breaking once more with the decade-long tradition whereby resolutions on this item have been adopted by consensus.

My country has always supported the efforts of the international community to find a political solution that is just, definitive and mutually acceptable to all parties involved in this question. Argentina has traditionally contributed military observers to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

The Argentine Republic is aware that the issue of Western Sahara is being discussed in the Fourth

Committee because it is an object of decolonization. Since 1975, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions determining that resolution 1514 (XV) is applicable to the subject of Western Sahara and that the principle of self-determination must guide the decolonization process in that Territory. It is worth noting that the consultative opinion of the International Court of Justice arrived at the same conclusions.

In that sense, it is important to my country that all issues of decolonization continue to be addressed in the body of primary competence within the United Nations system — the Special Political and Decolonization Committee — and that the criteria for the treatment of those issues be modified not unilaterally, but only through collective decisions of this General Assembly.

In the particular case of Western Sahara, that position translates into the ongoing support of Argentina for the search for a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions adopted over the past two years.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation reaffirms that Costa Rica has always believed that the decolonization process should be governed by the provisions of resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960, which declared the inalienable right to self-determination for all peoples.

In 1975, Costa Rica held a seat on the Security Council. Since that time, faithful to the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter and to the aforementioned resolution, we have rejected all claims by any State on the territory of what was once the Spanish Sahara. We believed then and continue to believe that the subject of Western Sahara is inscribed on the decolonization agenda and should therefore be governed by the guiding principles of the United Nations and by respect for the colonial borders that governed the decolonization of Africa, as ratified in paragraph (b) of article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

In the same vein, Costa Rica supported the Security Council's decisions to organize a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara, in particular its resolutions 658 (1990) and 690 (1991). Given that consistent vision with respect to Western Sahara, last year the General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution to that effect.

This year, unfortunately, that consensus was not reached. In light of contradictory positions, Costa Rica opted to abstain in the voting in the Fourth Committee as the most reasonable way of encouraging the parties to seek a satisfactory agreement as soon as possible. We abstained again in the General Assembly, but would not wish our abstention to be construed as a sign of support for one party to the conflict over another. Moreover, we would not wish thereby to be thought to be straying from the position we have held since the issue of Western Sahara was inscribed on the agenda. On the contrary, with respect to decolonization we maintain the same principles today that we adopted almost 50 years ago and with the same vigour that we did then.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): I would like to explain Austria's vote on resolution 61/125 on the question of Western Sahara, under agenda item 39.

Austria regrets that it was not possible to achieve consensus on the resolution on the question of Western Sahara. We would certainly have preferred the resolution to be adopted by consensus, and we hope that that will again be possible next year.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution in the Fourth Committee on 13 October and just now in plenary, as the text is virtually unchanged in comparison to that which the General Assembly adopted by consensus last year. I would like to underline, however, that Austria's vote in favour of the resolution should not be interpreted as favouring one party over the other. We continue to support a just and lasting political solution to the question of Western Sahara that is acceptable to all sides and which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, as laid down in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We also continue fully to support the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in their efforts to contribute to a solution of the question of Western Sahara.

Austria acknowledges the recent announcement by Morocco that the autonomy plan for Western Sahara has now been submitted to His Majesty the King for his consideration. We are interested in learning more about the specific proposals contained in the plan and look forward to its official presentation.

Austria hopes for substantial progress in the future. We are convinced that the parties will engage with the United Nations in good faith to find a peaceful solution.

Mr. Hanz (Germany): Germany deeply regrets the fact that it was not possible for the parties to reach agreement on this year's resolution on the question of Western Sahara.

Germany voted in favour of this year's resolution for consistency's sake. The text is identical to last year's resolution, on which both parties had reached consensus. We would like expressly to state that our vote must not be interpreted as a position for or against any of the parties to the conflict.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning the Western Sahara and the recommendations of his Personal Envoy, Mr. Van Walsum, contained in the report. Germany supports all efforts aimed at finding a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

We note with interest that Morocco is working on new proposals for the extended autonomy of Western Sahara, and would welcome a presentation of those proposals as soon as possible.

Mr. Ba-Omar (Oman) *(spoke in Arabic)*: My delegation abstained in the voting on draft resolution I, contained in document A/61/415, "Question of Western Sahara". My Government took that position because the two parties were not able to reach agreement on a text. We would like to state for the record that Security Council resolution 1495 (2003) considers the peace plan as the best political solution, based on its approval by the two parties. Our position is based on the fact that the plan did not receive the support of both parties. We hope that both parties will find the necessary mechanisms and means to settle this question in the near future on the basis of a comprehensive and just solution.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein) *(spoke in French)*: Liechtenstein has just voted in favour of the draft resolution on Western Sahara, which is virtually identical to the one adopted last year by consensus. Given the lack of progress in settling the matter, Liechtenstein believes it would have been inappropriate to changing its position.

My delegation deeply regrets that the negotiations between the parties did not lead to mutual understanding. However, our vote must in no way be understood as indicating support for either of the parties concerned. Liechtenstein fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General, who, through his Personal Envoy, is continuing to help the parties work towards a political settlement that just, lasting and mutually acceptable.

Liechtenstein's position on the right to self-determination is well known, particularly in respect of innovative approaches to the interpretation and realization of that right. We believe that this right cannot be reduced simply to the right to independence. We believe that various forms of self-administration and self-government cold be envisaged on a case-by-case basis.

Accordingly, we await with great interest the autonomy plan announced by the Kingdom of Morocco, and we will certainly study it carefully.

Mr. Pereyra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Concerning the question of Western Sahara, Peru has always maintained that it supports the efforts of the United Nations to arrive at a solution that is acceptable to the parties and is in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation would like to express its concern at the current deadlock in the negotiations. We urge all parties to heed the appeal of the Secretary-General to resume negotiations without preconditions, so as to arrive at a just and lasting political solution leading to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Today's abstention should not be understood as prejudging any agreement between the parties or Peru's stance in the Security Council, where this item remains on the agenda.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution before the Assembly today on the question of Western Sahara is simply an updated version of the one adopted by consensus at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. At that time, Switzerland had supported the consensus that was arrived at between the parties. We regret that it was impossible to arrive at such a consensus this year.

In the absence of any major progress towards a resolution of the question of the Western Sahara, the Swiss delegation felt that there were not sufficient grounds to justify any change in its position. Neither our vote today in the plenary of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session nor our vote of 13 October last in the Fourth Committee reflect a stance in favour or against either of the parties involved.

Switzerland supports the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to reach a negotiated solution that is acceptable to all parties concerned in the context of the question of Western Sahara.

My delegation shares the view of the Personal Envoy, who believes that negotiations between the parties is the only credible way of proceeding given the current deadlock, of which the peoples of the region are the primary victims.

Switzerland urges the parties to respond favourably to the appeal by the Secretary-General to open negotiations without any preconditions. We hope that this forum will be conducive to the presentation of the new proposals to be made soon by the Kingdom of Morocco. Switzerland awaits those proposals with great interest. Such negotiations must result in an equitable, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

Mr. Vidouris (Greece): Greece would like to make a statement in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted on the question of Western Sahara, on which we voted in favour. In that regard, we would like to reiterate, as is mentioned in the resolution, that the lack of progress in the settlement of the dispute on Western Sahara remains a source of potential instability in the region and obstructs the economic development of the Maghreb region, and that, in view of this, the quest for a political solution is critically needed.

We therefore strongly support the efforts of the Secretary-General and of his Personal Envoy to achieve a mutually acceptable political to the dispute over Western Sahara, and we reiterate the call on all the parties and the States of the region to continue to cooperate fully with the United Nations to end the current impasse and to achieve progress towards a mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): Italy is deeply concerned at the present stalemate in the Western Sahara, particularly with respect to its consequences for the civilian population. Italy is strongly committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, among which is the purpose of developing friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as stated in Article I, paragraph 2.

Italy strongly believes in the rejection of violence as a means of resolving international disputes. Italy looks forward to a consensual solution to this long-standing dispute. All parties should enhance the existing dialogue in order to maximize the chances of working out a mutually acceptable solution that would serve the cause of the Sahrawi people. Italy is therefore confident that all parties involved will spare no effort, in a spirit of constructive engagement, and also through direct contacts and other means, to find an appropriate settlement. Such an achievement will be the necessary point of departure to relaunch a fruitful regional cooperation among all the States and peoples of the Maghreb.

In that regard, we view with interest the announcement made by Morocco to propose a plan before 31 March 2007.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom voted in favour of the resolution on Western Sahara. We previously voted for the draft resolution at the committee stage. The United Kingdom acknowledges the considerable efforts made to reach a consensus on the text of the draft resolution and regrets that a consensus text could not be agreed. The United Kingdom notes that the text is based closely on the resolution agreed at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

The United Kingdom would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Peter van Walsum, for their continuing efforts to find a political solution to the question of Western Sahara. The United Kingdom remains concerned that the question of Western Sahara continues to be unresolved, with consequent problems for the people of the region as a whole. The United Kingdom hopes that there will be progress towards a solution over the coming months and looks forward to new initiatives intended to move the situation beyond the current impasse, including the publication of Morocco's latest proposals.

It remains the United Kingdom's view that any solution to this issue has to be mutually acceptable, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and must provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with United Nations requirements, again, as set out in previous Security Council resolutions.

I would now like to turn to the issue of Gibraltar. The United Kingdom does not believe that the principle of territorial integrity is applicable to the decolonization of Gibraltar. The United Kingdom would not ever enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their wishes. We support the right of self-determination of the people of Gibraltar, promoted in accordance with the other principles and rights set out in the United Nations Charter. In that respect, however, I should like to recall our well-known position with regard to article X of the Treaty of Utrecht.

Her Majesty's Government believes that, despite the well-known differences with Spain on sovereignty matters, it is possible for the three parties to work together for the benefit of the people of Gibraltar and the surrounding region.

Mr. Song Young-wan (Republic of Korea): My delegation expresses its deep regret that this year, despite strenuous efforts by the parties concerned, consensus was not possible on the resolution on Western Sahara. The Government of the Republic of Korea has supported the position that the question of Western Sahara should be resolved through a mutually acceptable political solution based on the principle of self-determination, in line with the resolution adopted by consensus last year during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My delegation abstained in the voting on the current resolution, because we believe that a consensus resolution should be adopted through dialogue and negotiation between the parties concerned. Therefore, our abstention should not be interpreted as an indication that we favour one party over another.

Mr. Cato (Philippines): Like those who spoke before us, the Philippines would have preferred that the resolution on the question of Western Sahara be adopted without a vote, as we did last year. The Philippines abstained, because we would like to encourage our good friends Algeria and Morocco to exert extra efforts to find agreement and move the process forward. We would like to underscore, however, that the Philippine abstention should not be seen as an expression of support for either party to this long-standing issue. Lastly, we hope that all parties concerned will continue to take much-needed steps to help bring about a peaceful and lasting solution to this issue.

Mr. Malhotra (India): India supports efforts aimed at a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara. We believe that such a solution can be reached through dialogue in a spirit of cooperation. We share the sense of disappointment that it was not possible to work out a consensus this year on the General Assembly resolution on the question of Western Sahara. India's abstention in the voting should not be interpreted as its being in favour of either side.

Mr. Chaimongkol (Thailand): With regard to the resolution on the question of Western Sahara, my delegation wishes to join other Member States in expressing deep concern and regret that the parties concerned have not been able to find a consensual political solution to this protracted dispute.

Thailand wishes to reaffirm its position of neutrality on this issue by having abstained in the voting on the resolution on the question of Western Sahara. Thailand also wishes to reiterate that our decision to abstain should by no means be interpreted as favouring one side over the other. It should, rather, be interpreted as a sincere appeal for the matter to be resolved in the near future, for the benefit of the people of this region and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Thailand therefore strongly urges the parties concerned to seek a peaceful and lasting political solution through dialogue and negotiations. Thailand also calls for concerted effort on the part of the international community to assist the parties involved in order to expedite the settlement of this dispute.

Mrs. Wandel (Denmark): Denmark abstained in the voting on the resolution on the question of Western Sahara. Every year for the past 18 years, with the exception of the year 2004, the parties have been able to arrive at a consensus text on the issue of Western Sahara. We deeply regret that a consensus was not reached this year.

Denmark would like to emphasize its firm neutral position in relation to this conflict. We continue to support a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. All parties to the conflict are encouraged to show good faith and to work towards that goal through dialogue.

Denmark sincerely hopes and expects to see substantial progress towards a peaceful settlement in the coming months. We expect Morocco to fulfil its promise to formally present its plan before 31 March 2007.

Mr. Piperkov (Bulgaria): The Republic of Bulgaria consistently supports the efforts to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara, achieved through political means and based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. As an expression of that position, Bulgaria joined the consensus last year for the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/114, whose text is almost exactly repeated in resolution 61/125 this year.

In view of that, we would like to point out our concern at the lack of progress on a peaceful solution to the problem and at the fact that, despite extensive efforts during the current session of the General Assembly, a consensus on the text of the resolution was not possible. Therefore, we did not participate in the voting in the Fourth Committee, and now in the General Assembly the Bulgarian delegation abstained. That abstention should not be interpreted as being in favour of any party; rather, it should be considered an expression of our constructive position on achieving a mutually acceptable political solution.

The Republic of Bulgaria reaffirms its support for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and, in particular, for the endeavours of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. The implementation of the mandate of MINURSO does not exclude, but rather requires, the exchange of opinions among the parties concerned within any appropriate framework, including on a bilateral basis. Bulgaria remains convinced that the long-term solution of the question of Western Sahara will promote the security, cooperation and integration process in North-West Africa.

Ms. Malcata (Portugal): I would like to explain the Portuguese vote on draft resolution I, on the question of Western Sahara. Portugal recalls its earlier statement in the Fourth Committee and stresses that its abstention should not be interpreted as being in favour of either one of the opposing parties on the issue, but rather that Portugal wishes that a consensus solution for the question of Western Sahara be found.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 39?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 110

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/416)

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) contained in document A/61/416?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 110.

It was so decided.

Agenda item 118

Programme planning

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/417)

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) contained in document A/61/417?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 118. The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) before it.

Agenda item 69 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Draft resolution A/61/L.45

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolutions A/61/L.42, A/61/L.44 and A/61/L.46

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Draft resolution A/61/L.47

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on agenda item 69 and its sub-items (a) and (d) at its 52nd and 53rd plenary meetings, held on 13 November 2006.

Before proceeding further, on behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Jean-Marc Hoscheit of Luxembourg for coordinating the consultations and negotiations on the draft resolutions under agenda item 69 and for having successfully completed the task entrusted to him.

In connection with draft resolution A/61/L.45, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat to announce some corrections.

Mr. Botnaru (Chief, General Assembly Affairs Branch): The following corrections should be made to draft resolution A/61/L.45 to accurately reflect the text agreed in the informal consultations. In the second line of the sixteenth preambular paragraph, the phrase "humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel" should read "United Nations personnel and associated humanitarian personnel". In operative paragraph 2, the words "and associated" should be deleted. In the first line of operative paragraph 4, the word "involved" should be deleted. In operative paragraph 18, the word "law" should be added after "national" in the last line. In operative paragraph 28, "United Nations" should be added before "Department of Safety and Security" and, immediately following, "to ensure" should read "for". In the first line of operative paragraph 29, "ensuring" should read "facilitating".

These corrections will be reflected in the final version of the resolution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.42.

Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development", as contained in document A/61/L.42.

It is well known that natural disasters affect the social and economic development of all countries, but particularly developing countries. The latter do not always have the capacity to deal with the adverse impacts of such events. Although it may not be possible to completely eliminate the suffering caused by natural disasters, efforts towards relief and development assistance could help in the recovery and long-term rehabilitation of those affected by such disasters.

By introducing this draft resolution, the Group of 77 and China again highlights the importance of strengthening international cooperation, especially through the effective use of multilateral mechanisms in the provision of humanitarian assistance during all phases of a disaster, from relief and mitigation to development.

At the same time, it is recognized that the affected State has the primary responsibility in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory. The importance of the principles contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182, the annex to which contains the guiding principles for the strengthening of coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system, are also highlighted in this draft resolution.

The draft resolution also recognizes the need to continue to explore ways to strengthen the rapid response capacities of the international community to provide immediate humanitarian relief, building on existing arrangements and ongoing initiatives. In this regard, the role that information and telecommunications technology can play in disaster response is also highlighted. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of addressing vulnerability and integrating risk reduction into all phases of natural disaster management, post-natural disaster recovery and development planning, while also recognizing the value of international cooperation in support of the efforts of affected countries.

The draft resolution is also mindful of the importance of rapid access to funds to ensure a more predictable and timely United Nations response to humanitarian emergencies, welcoming, in this regard, the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund through resolution 61/2. An appeal is also made that all disasters should receive equal and adequate response, bearing in mind that the allocation of resources should be driven by needs.

Lastly, the draft resolution expresses deep concern at the number and scale of natural disasters and their increasing impact, which result in massive loss of life and property worldwide. It is that concern, together with the recognition that natural disasters impact negatively on achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, which necessitates the continued attention of the international community to this important issue.

As in the past, many countries have sponsored this important draft resolution. In addition to the countries listed in the document, we are pleased to announce that the following countries have joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Belarus, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, the Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine.

It is now my privilege, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to request the Assembly to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.44.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam — the draft resolution contained in document A/61/L.44, entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster". I wish to thank the other 153 Member States that have sponsored the draft resolution. In addition to those mentioned in document A/61/L.44, the following countries have joined as sponsors of the draft resolution: Belize, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Germany, Moldova, Oman, San Marino and Serbia.

ASEAN expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports, which provide perspectives on lessons learned from the ongoing recovery efforts in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, and for his recommendations on the subject.

Natural disasters affect both the rich and the poor. At any time and any day a natural disaster can strike. From Hurricane Katrina to the Indian Ocean tsunami, we have heard of countless stories of people losing their loved ones and their homes and property to natural disasters. We must therefore remain vigilant in our global effort to prevent catastrophes by minimizing the negative effects of such disasters.

There are some indications that worse is yet to come. Last year alone, there was a high incidence of extreme weather events all over the world. More recently, hundreds of people died from mudslides after Typhoon Durian struck the Philippines.

Developing countries stand to lose a lot as a result of their lack of capacity to handle post-disaster rehabilitation, and it is their goal to prevent disasters from taking away the fruits of hard-earned development. Closer international cooperation is therefore urgent.

ASEAN's efforts in the area of disaster reduction are aimed at strengthening our regional response capacity, taking into consideration the lessons of the Indian Ocean tsunami and other disasters in other parts of the world. ASEAN believes that the effects of disaster can be managed and that risks can be reduced through development programmes and quick-response actions. The Indian Ocean tsunami revealed ASEAN member countries' lack of preparedness and weaknesses in responding collectively to such large-scale calamities. Although ASEAN had a mechanism for mutual assistance for natural disasters that had been in existence since June 1976, the mechanism needed to be restructured to meet the current needs, including identifying and mobilizing available resources into an effective response system.

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response has replaced the 1976 arrangements. We have undertaken several activities to test the regional response mechanism, including a simulated exercise on flood disaster, conducted in Cambodia in September. A few months earlier, teams from the ASEAN member countries were among the first to respond to the earthquake that took place in Indonesia on 27 May 2006. Teams from Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand were at various locations providing medical assistance and relief efforts for the earthquake victims, in close coordination with the Indonesian authorities. Other ASEAN member countries, including Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, sent food supplies and cash contributions to Indonesia. The ASEAN Regional Forum is also planning to develop guidelines for civilian and military cooperation to ensure swift responses to natural disasters. The plan includes taking an inventory of the transport capabilities of the region's armed forces that can be used for humanitarian operations in the aftermath of a calamity.

Draft resolution A/61/L.44 updates General Assembly resolution 60/15 of 14 November 2005. The draft resolution emphasizes a number of salient points. First, it stresses the need for the continued support and assistance of the international community in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. Secondly, it highlights the need for contributions to the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia in support of the establishment of an early warning system in accordance with the needs of the countries in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian countries.

Thirdly, it emphasizes the importance of the Global Consortium for Tsunami Affected Countries to identify common practices and to implement actions for the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. Fourthly, it stresses the need for the regular updating of recovery assessment by the Governments of affected countries, the United Nations and international and regional financial institutions, with the participation of local communities, in order to measure progress and identify gaps and priorities. Fifthly, it emphasizes the importance of promoting transparency and accountability among donors and recipient countries and the continued support of donors for further development of online tracking systems of affected countries. Sixthly, it highlights the support of international agencies for the development of national capacity for tsunami warning and response systems.

We hope that this important draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as it plays a key role in supporting affected countries' efforts in disaster-risk management.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Finland to introduce draft resolutions A/61/L.45 and A/61/L.47.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): It is my pleasure, on behalf of the European Union, to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.45, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel", and draft resolution A/61/L.47, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people". With regard to draft resolution A/61/L.45, I am pleased to announce that, in addition to the countries listed in the text, Albania, Belize, Bulgaria, the Central African Republic, Gambia, Georgia, Mali, Moldova, Montenegro, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Turkey and Uruguay have requested to be included as sponsors.

Humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel conducting operations in the field provide an invaluable service to millions of people in need, often at great personal risk. The deeply disturbing information on the deaths, injuries and harassment of those personnel, as well as the fact that the perpetrators of such acts of violence seemingly operate with impunity, clearly demonstrates that this issue deserves our urgent attention.

The draft resolution before us addresses both the issues of strengthening the normative framework for the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, as well as efforts to promote and enhance the security management system of the United Nations.

First, on the normative framework, the draft resolution calls upon all States to consider becoming parties to and to respect fully their obligations under the relevant international instruments, mindful of the need to promote the universality of the United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. The Optional Protocol to the Convention is a very important step forward in the protection of United Nations and associated personnel. The draft resolution calls upon all States to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol as soon as possible and urges States parties to put in place appropriate national legislation, as necessary, to enable the effective implementation of the Optional Protocol.

The draft resolution also recommends that the Secretary-General continue to seek the inclusion of, and that host countries include, key provisions of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, among others, in the host country agreements and other related agreements negotiated between the United Nations and those countries. Importantly, the draft resolution reaffirms the need to hold accountable those responsible for all threats and acts of violence against humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, and urges States to end impunity for such acts.

Secondly, the draft resolution acknowledges the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General to further enhance the security management system of the United Nations, welcoming the establishment and the work of the Department of Safety and Security. The draft recognizes the need for continued efforts to enhance coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and other relevant organizations to address mutual security concerns in the field. The draft resolution also invites the United Nations and, as appropriate, other humanitarian organizations working closely with host States, to further strengthen the analysis of threats to the safety and security of their personnel. The draft also highlights the importance of information on the range and scope of security incidents involving humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel.

In addition, the draft resolution addresses the importance of providing humanitarian and United Nations staff with adequate information and training on security, and encourages collaborative initiatives to address security training needs. Recalling the essential role of telecommunication resources, the draft also addresses the issue of limiting and, whenever possible, lifting the restrictions placed on the use of communications equipment by United Nations and associated personnel.

The increasing dangers faced by international and national staff involved in humanitarian and United Nations operations underline the urgency of the need for further measures to reinforce their safety and security. It is our sincere hope that this draft resolution will contribute to wider efforts to provide the necessary security and protection required for humanitarian and United Nations and associated personnel in assisting those in need.

Finally, I would like to thank all interested delegations for their constructive engagement on the text in the informal consultations, which were conducted in a positive spirit. My delegation and other sponsors hope that the draft resolution contained in document A/61/L.45 will be adopted by consensus.

I will now turn to draft resolution A/61/L.47, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

At the outset, I would like to announce a minor editorial correction to the text. In the twelfth preambular paragraph, there should be quotation marks around the phrase "Stockholm International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories".

The European Union (EU) reiterates its commitment to the provision of assistance to the Palestinian people. The overall EU assistance to the Palestinian people this year exceeds €655 million, which is an increase from last year and makes us again the single biggest donor.

Under the present circumstances, we underline the wider role played by the temporary international mechanism in providing essential relief to a large part of the Palestinian population since its launch in June 2006. The contributions of other donors to the mechanism are deeply valued. In view of the protracted deterioration of the socio-economic situation of the Palestinians, the European Union has endorsed a further three-month extension of the mechanism until March 2007.

The European Union commends the efforts of President Abbas over the past six months to form a Government of national unity. We stand ready to work with a Palestinian Government that adopts a platform reflecting the Quartet principles. If such a Government is formed, the EU undertakes to resume partnership with the Palestinian Government and encourages its Quartet partners to do likewise; to continue, with other donors, providing financial support; and to prepare, in cooperation with the new Government, a long-term plan on capacity-building, border management and unified and effective security forces, as well as a functioning administration.

The present draft resolution is primarily of a humanitarian nature. The EU has repeatedly reiterated its support for the three principles set out by the Quartet, and in that context we consider that the essence of those principles is contained in the present draft resolution.

I would like to express our gratitude to the numerous delegations that have requested to be included as sponsors of the draft resolution. On behalf of the sponsors, I would like to express our sincere hope that all delegations will be in a position to support this important draft resolution, as they did last year.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.46.

Mr. Liden (Sweden): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, a draft resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, contained in document A/61/L.46.

Since the origin of resolutions on this matter at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 1992, and through the subsequent establishment of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the emergency response capacity of the United Nations has been strengthened considerably. Operational agencies, such as the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF, continue to respond rapidly and effectively in humanitarian relief. OCHA and the mechanisms for inter-agency coordination, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, have enhanced coordination among the humanitarian organizations of the United Nations and with non-United Nations partners.

Significant challenges remain, however, in the implementation of important principles for humanitarian assistance as well as in humanitarian funding and coordination. The draft resolution before us today should contribute to further progress in strengthening the coordination of the United Nations humanitarian system.

I would like to announce that, since the draft resolution was introduced to the Assembly, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belize, El Salvador, Estonia, the Gambia, Georgia, Israel, Jamaica, Moldova, the Philippines, Romania, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United States of America.

My delegation is grateful for the improvements made in the text by colleagues through a series of informal consultations. We would like to thank the sponsors and other delegations for the good and constructive spirit of cooperation and partnership in which the consultations were held. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, Jean-Marc Hoscheit, for ably guiding our work.

The draft resolution addresses issues of principle for humanitarian protection and assistance, as well as issues related to efforts to further strengthen international humanitarian response. In the first category, we recognize gender-based violence as a growing concern in humanitarian emergencies. The draft resolution urges all States to take effective measures to address gender-based violence and encourages organizations of the United Nations to strengthen their support services for victims.

I would also like to highlight that the draft reaffirms the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence for the provision of humanitarian assistance, and calls upon Governments and parties in complex humanitarian emergencies to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations and to ensure safe and unhindered access to affected populations. It expresses the General Assembly's grave concern at violence deliberately directed against civilian populations in many emergency situations. It calls upon States to adopt preventive measures and effective responses to acts of violence against civilian populations and invites States to promote a culture of protection.

In the area of humanitarian funding and coordination, the main issue is to consolidate the three-pillar agenda of humanitarian reform: to strengthen humanitarian response capacities, to improve humanitarian coordination and to enhance predictable and adequate funding.

In order to build strong United Nations leadership at the field level and to support country ownership and cooperation, efforts to strengthen the Humanitarian Coordinator need to be intensified. The draft resolution encourages OCHA to continue its efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian action and calls upon relevant humanitarian actors to improve the humanitarian response capacities at all levels and coordination at the field level and to enhance transparency, performance and accountability. The draft resolution also encourages the United Nations to pursue recent efforts to strengthen partnerships with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as well as humanitarian non-governmental organizations.

Humanitarian funding remains crucial to ensure adequate United Nations response capacity, and there has been progress in developing a more coherent approach. The draft resolution calls for further development of the consolidated appeals process as an instrument for strategic planning. It also emphasizes the need to mobilize adequate resources for humanitarian assistance.

In last year's resolution (resolution 60/124), Member States decided to upgrade the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into a Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). It was the first concrete manifestation of the overall United Nations reform process after the World Summit. Sweden was an early believer in the Fund, but few could have predicted its enormous success. Who would have expected contributions from as many as 67 Member States, some of them humanitarian donors for the first time? The ambitious target for the first year of operations was $250 million, and the Fund reached $298 million.

Last week, donors had already pledged the impressive amount of $345 million for 2007. Sweden's contribution to the CERF for 2007 will also increase — from this year's $41 million to more than $50 million. The draft resolution before us welcomes the establishment of the CERF, urges all Member States to consider making voluntary contributions to the Fund and reaffirms our common funding target of $500 million by 2008.

My delegation and our fellow sponsors hope that the draft resolution contained in document A/61/L.46 will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/61/L.42, A/61/L.44, A/61/L.45 as orally corrected, A/61/L.46, and A/61/L.47 as orally corrected.

I call on the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

Mr. Ross (United States of America): I speak with reference to draft resolution A/61/L.47, on assistance to the Palestinian people. Traditionally, the United States has been pleased to join the consensus on this resolution. It regrets that it cannot do so this year and will abstain.

I must emphasize that the United States shares the concern of the international community regarding the hardships facing the Palestinian people. The Arab world, and the Palestinian people in particular, are aware of the significant, continuing assistance of the United States to the Palestinian people for basic human needs and for civil society and private sector development.

Through its substantial financial contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United States has consistently demonstrated its support for humanitarian relief efforts for Palestinian refugees. In 2006, the United States was the largest single contributor of assistance to the Palestinian people, committing more than $135 million to UNRWA, including $50.85 million towards UNRWA's emergency appeal to aid refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, announced on 14 July by the United States, Palestinian Authority President Abbas and UNRWA Commissioner AbuZayd. Nonetheless, the United States cannot support this particular draft resolution, because it fails to include language on the need for the Palestinian Authority Government to accept the three Quartet principles: renunciation of violence and terror; recognition of Israel; and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map.

Although the draft resolution properly welcomes the role currently being played by the temporary international mechanism in assisting the Palestinian people, it regrettably fails to note that that mechanism was created as a specific consequence of the failure of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government to commit itself to the Quartet principles. This being so, any resolution must make explicit reference to both the temporary international mechanism and the Quartet principles. It should also encourage the provision of assistance via United Nations agencies, other international organizations and the Quartet-approved temporary international mechanism. For those reasons, the United States cannot support the draft resolution and must abstain.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/61/L.42, A/61/L.44, A/61/L.45 as orally corrected, A/61/L.46 and A/61/L.47 as orally corrected.

Draft resolution A/61/L.42 is entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Guyana and Zambia. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.42?

Draft resolution A/61/L.42 was adopted (resolution 61/131).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.44 is entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Italy has become a sponsor. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.44?

Draft resolution A/61/L.44 was adopted (resolution 61/132).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.45 is entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel". Since the introduction of the draft resolution, Angola has become a sponsor. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.45, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/61/L.45, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 61/133).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.46 is entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations". May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.46?

Draft resolution A/61/L.46 was adopted (resolution 61/134).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.47, as orally corrected, is entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

Since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries has become sponsors: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Croatia, Estonia, the Gambia, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Lichtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South

Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Fiji, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Draft resolution A/61/L.47, as orally corrected, was adopted by 159 votes to none, with 7 abstentions (resolution 61/135).

[Subsequently, the delegations of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Saint Lucia advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that, owing to the lateness of the hour, we will hear those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote or position on the resolutions just adopted and will take up the remaining items tomorrow, immediately following the adjournment of the tenth emergency special session.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.